

AN AMERICAN IN NEW YORK



OPTE READ

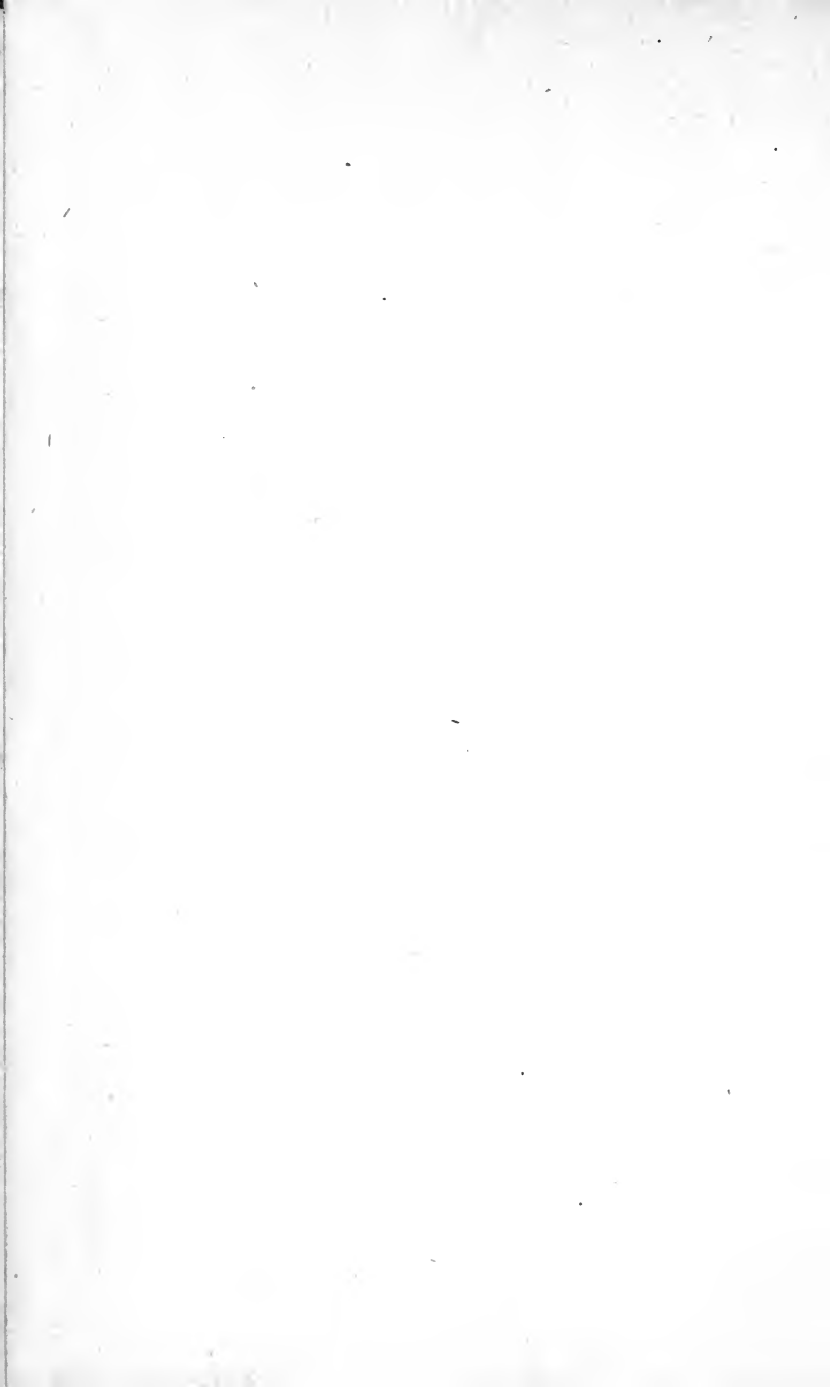


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"BOWED WITH A GRACE THAT WAS NOT UNBECOMING."

AN AMERICAN IN NEW YORK

A Novel of Today

BY

OPIE READ

*Author of "A Kentucky Colonel," "The Starbucks,"
"The Jucklins," &c., &c.*



ILLUSTRATED BY

EMLEN McCONNELL AND HOWARD HEATH

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DEDICATION.

To George W. Clawson, of St. Louis—honest, adventurous; a man with a keen mind and without fear—to him, a typical American, I affectionately dedicate this book.

THE AUTHOR.

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CHAPTER I.

THE WALDORF HOTEL.

Along with the education of the past he had a shrewd eye for the present, and he called himself an American in New York. In the great Waldorf Hotel, where the lamps burn at midday as at midnight, he was unconsciously conspicuous as slowly he strode down the corridor known as Millionaire Lane, where, in the evening, were gathered the wealthier members of the Stock Exchange, speculation polite in full dress, with many a bow and sallow smile, but just as heartless and as replete with human greed as when on the "floor" in Wall Street, beneath the cold eye of the gray-bearded old chairman sitting high in his marble balcony.

Every one turned to look at the tall, middle-aged American, so expressive of a quiet home somewhere remote from the politer forms of throat-cutting, and so different was he from the average man, so pronounced a physical

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remembrance of the considerate past in this swiftly-gestured present, that the elegant idlers seated along the alabaster wall regarded him in the light of an amusing discovery.

A student of the English classics would not have strained much to pronounce him a latter-day Sir Roger, marveling and moralizing in the great city. Some one had heard him say to a bell-boy that he lived out in America and that this was his first trip abroad.

In the Waldorf not all, however, was the bead on the froth of aimless life, for here where local fashion and foreign decoration paraded, admired of the imitative and the thoughtless, were also gathered the bone of gigantic industry and the muscle of fearless adventure, organizers of mighty corporations, and travelers who from the backs of trumpeting elephants had fought the striped terror of the jungle. From Arizona and from Mexico had come men with mining stocks, financial carpet-baggers, for in many a gripsack was there a gold brick wrapped in convincing silk. It was a world within itself, the Waldorf Hotel, a world of apparent opulence, for obvious poverty did not peep in at the door.

Off from the gay halls was a Turkish smok-



**"IN FUTURE WHEN YOU HEAR ME LAUGH, TAKE TO YOUR
HEELS."**



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ing-room. Here nicotine broke through convention. Stranger struck match for stranger and handed it to him. This meant, "You may ask me about the stock market and I will genially mislead you." In this place, a twilight amid rich hangings, the American soon established himself, the centre of a social commonwealth. Early in his career as a member of this colony he laughed with an outburst so loud that a London porter, passing through the room, halted and stared at him.

"How much was that worth?" the American inquired. The flunky begged "pardon." "I want to know how much that laugh is likely to have damaged you—the hearing of it? But I want to tell you, sir, that along with my other baggage, I've brought with me a few of my natural habits." Then a considerate thought struck him. "But I reckon you've got your own habits, too. Here's fifty cents, and in future, when you hear me laugh, take to your heels."

"I will do so, sir," said the porter, pocketing the fifty cents without the suggestion of a smile; and ever afterward he kept his word.

It was a matter of recognized necessity to call the American Colonel. He soon became

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a sort of favorite with ladies. They liked to listen to his stories, and be it known that, with two continents striving to minister to her whims, the average woman is more nearly natural than the average man. They all of them scream when they encounter a mouse, the farce-comedies tell us, and their comments upon the appearance of a grizzly bear are almost uniformly the same. The American was to them a sort of grizzly bear, captured a long time ago but in a softened way retaining all of the most interesting of his wild and mountainous manners.

"Why do you call yourself an American in New York?" inquired Mrs. Flashroll, wife of Judge Flashroll, who with much nipping and a great deal of tucking managed to live for a few months of the year at the Waldorf.

"Because, madam, I have lived nearly all over America, and this is the only town that puts me in mind of a country I have never seen. Why, the other day I was near the mountain range where Nassau trails into Broad street, and I saw an American flag floating from the top of an ancient building. I have heard men say how the old flag, seen suddenly in foreign ports, made them feel, and it

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wasn't hard to persuade myself that I felt just about that way. So in I goes to offer my congratulations, and I asked if the American consul was in. The fellow that I spoke to pretended not to understand. 'The American consul?' said he. 'Why, we have no American consul here.' 'Is that a fact?' I replied. 'Then i'gad, I'm farther away from home than I thought I was.' "

The men winked and the women smiled. "We never know when you are—are—well, guying us," said Mrs. Flashroll.

The American arose and bowed. "Madam," said he, "I never guy a lady."

"How long have you been here, Colonel?"

"Madam, when a man is abroad he doesn't somehow have a very good hold on time. It may seem longer or shorter than it is. I will remark, however, that I am here on my wedding journey."

"Your wedding journey! Why, where is your wife?"

"Well, that is to be explained. Years ago, when I married, I was too low in the financial scale to think of a bridal tour, but my wife was broad-minded and did not complain. However, we didn't forget it; no, madam, we kept

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it endearingly in mind, hoping and working for the time when we should be able to stand the expense of such a trip. Well, the time came at last, a week or so ago. The children were settled and I had made rather an advantageous sale of property, so I says, 'Mother, get your things ready and we'll take that bridal tour.' 'Where to?' she asks, and I scratched my head. 'Well, say New York,' but she shakes her head. 'No, don't care to go there; don't know anybody, and I have heard that they ain't at all sociable. Mrs. Vance, over at Deerlick, was there two months, a-visiting her son, and didn't get acquainted with anybody to speak of, nor to speak to, for that matter. I believe I'd rather go back to Mount Sterling, Kentucky, where I was raised.' So, madam, we agreed that she should go there and I should come here, but have it understood that we both were on our wedding tours."

A smile went around. The woman asked him if he were a Southerner, a soothing flattery to one born in the South, and he answered that he was, originally, having been born in Kentucky; "and while," said he, "I continue to have been born in that State, yet I have

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lived nearly everywhere in America and regard myself in the light of a nationalist."

"But you don't like New York."

He gave her what in a poker game would have looked like the propitiating smile of a winner. "Ah, madam, that's where you misjudge me. It is not for me to dislike any part of the Master's footstool, but I don't know that I am commanded not to criticise one or more of the legs on which the stool stands. There are many things here that are most un-American to me—not a want of politeness, I assure you, for that is as often characteristic of an ignoramus as of a statesman, but a certain and I might say a most pronounced and eager strife to get away from the democratic customs of our fathers. But I am not one who believes that the world is growing worse or that the young man of to-day is not of as good fibre as I was at his age. The fact is that the youngster of to-day knows about twice as much as I did, but this young fellow, contrary to the opinion hemmed in on this narrow island, is not wholly nor in large part confined to the city of New York. Six weeks west of Manhattan teach him more than six years do here. All that is necessary in this life is not to com-

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mit Broadway to memory from one end to the other. A man may do that and still miss nearly all the immortal beauties of Shakespeare. And that reminds me. I came here expecting to see Shakespeare played, but am told that they have sent him back to the country where they say he belongs. Writers that never saw a wild tree"—by which he meant a tree not confined in a tub or nurtured in a park—"find fault with his shrubbery, madam. They say he was rude in speech, and so was old Jeremiah, but i'gad, they haven't beat him very far yet. But I reckon that man and woman, not only in New York but in nearly all parts of the country, have become too busy to listen to wisdom."

"Speaking again of the drama in New York," he said, "I am forced to announce the fact that there isn't any drama here. The whole thing is a tune and a jig. You are passing through what might be called the night sweats of the drama. Dignity has turned loose, sir, to dance a breakdown. The worse the show is the better you are pleased. If a fellow comes along with a new sort of flip-flap he is a hero. Your rhyme is kidney-footed and your dancing is vulgar. A pair of black-

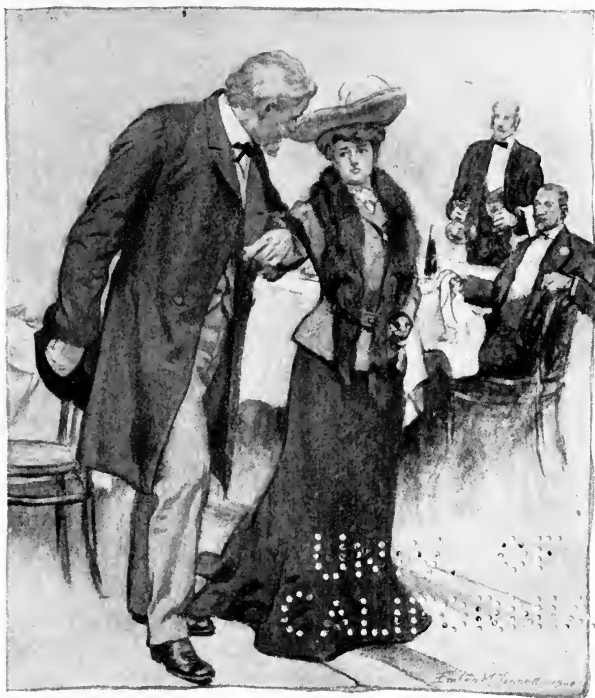
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ened eyes and a mouth made at the audience take the place of dramatic action. In your tastes you haven't the excuse of a couple of fellows I saw one night standing before the opera house in Little Rock, Arkansas. A bill announced that John MacCullough was playing *Virginius*. These two fellows halted and looked up the stairway. 'Why, Bill, here's a show.' 'Ah, hah, but what sort of a show is it? Want to go up?' The other fellow stared at the bill. 'Let's see if we can make out what it means. Sleight o' hand, I reckon. Seen a man at a schoolhouse t'other night, out our way, that I'll bet can swallow two knives to his one. We've seen all he can do. Thar's a sick hoss at the wagon yard. Let's go round thar.' Those fellows had something to keep them away from the real drama, for I want to tell you that out where they lived a sick horse meant a good deal. But here a sick poodle would serve. Of course, in my country, America, I mean, from a time almost ancient we have looked to New York for the stamp of her approval; but either one of two things must happen if this continues; we've got to lose our recollection of what is good or New York must revise her judgment."

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"I suppose," mischievously remarked one of the ladies, "that, after the manner of the early English, you would keep women off the stage altogether."

"Oh, no, madam. If the drama at the present time showed any signs of preservation I should say that it was largely due to woman. Woman is as a general thing more convincing than man, and without delicious illusion the play is but impotent talk. An instance: Rather late last night I dropped into a Broadway restaurant. There were but few customers, rendering it easy to pick out personages whom I thought worthy of study—a habit of mine, sir," and he nodded at a man who had just drawn up to join the listeners. "And I noticed particularly a gentleman and a lady sitting at a table not far away. But would you believe it, while I was looking a quarrel arose between them? It did, and the man, in a most undignified and, I might say, ungentlemanly, manner, arose, snatched up his gloves which lay beside a plate, and in a huff departed. The lady was much embarrassed, I assure you, and I saw clearly that she didn't know what to do; and I should have hastened to minister to her in this, the hour of her dis-



"I SHALL NOT FORGET THE SMILE ON THE FACE OF A BRUTE,
SITTING AT A TABLE."

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tress, had I possessed the honor of her acquaintance."

"What did you do, Colonel?"

The question was asked by a woman. "Madam, I don't know what I should have done had not something happened at the critical moment. She came over and spoke to me. First let me note her appearance. I recall in a poem somewhere—'And her eye was of that tinge of the sky when the trout leaps quickest to catch the fly.' That was her eye—blue as the sky that must lie beyond our vision; and her hair was black, a rain-cloud shredded and silkened, and her voice as she spoke with sweet hesitation was almost hushed in its own trembling melody. 'Sir,' she said—and I was on my feet in a moment, I assure you—'sir, will you be kind enough to see me to my carriage?' Would I? Her chariot was waiting just without, I gathered from a few notes of stray music which she dropped, and she wanted no aid except to be seen to it; she had her own purse, she somehow told me, swinging it by a golden chain. The unfortunate quarrel with her—but no matter, the carriage was waiting and she would go home alone. I bowed, gave her my arm and we walked out,

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and I shall not forget the smile on the face of a brute sitting at a table. Well, the carriage stood at the curb, just a little ways up the street. The driver opened the door and she got in. 'Oh, I am so much obliged to you,' she said with a little whimper as sweet as the gurgle of June water. 'I really don't know what I should have done without you. James, you may drive to—Wait a moment. Oh, yes, give me my purse, please.' The latter remark was directed to me. 'Your purse? I haven't it.'

" 'Oh, yes, I gave it to you.'

" 'I beg your pardon, but you are mistaken.'

" 'Oh, no, I'm not. Don't trifle with me when I placed so much confidence in you. Give me my purse, please.'

"And then the cabman spoke up: 'Give the dame her pocketbook or I'll call the cop.'

"There was a fine predicament for an American away from his friends. Swearing upon my honor would have availed nothing."

"But what did you do, Colonel?"

" 'I beg your pardon, here it is,' I said, and I took out my own pocketbook and handed it

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to her, and snatching it eagerly she fell back into the carriage and was driven away."

"Your own pocketbook! And was there anything in it?"

"Madam, it was stuffed full—of pieces of goods that my wife had given me to match. Ah, she was convincing, and i'gad, she saved me a world of trouble."

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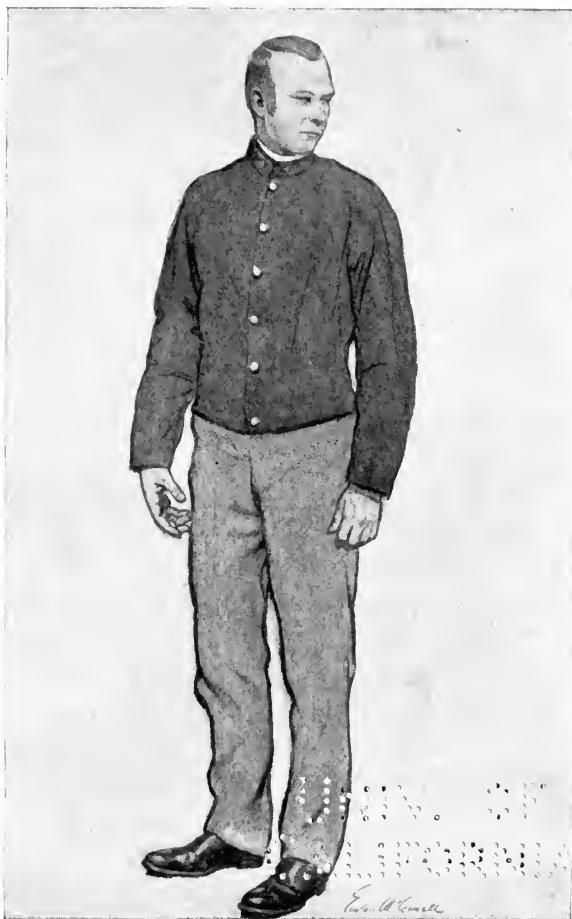
CHAPTER I I.

THE COLONEL HAS SOMETHING TO SAY ON POLITICAL ECONOMY.

With the usual circle about him, in the Waldorf, the American in New York was telling an East Indian tiger-hunter of the dangers of hunting the grizzly bear. The trouble was that the grizzly didn't know when he was dead; and even after the "inquest," he was likely to arise and assume new license for unwarranted depredation. The tiger-hunter, an English gentleman, blinked his eyes as if into them had been blown a sudden sand gust from the desert. He said that he didn't quite gather. He had heard that the grizzly bear was whimsical, indeed petulant, but in blood-thirstiness could not be compared with the tiger.

"Well," said the Colonel, "the grizzly kills a man, and to go beyond that point is somewhat of an unnatural strain."

"Ah," the Englishman replied, "but that is precisely what the tiger does. He eats his victim."



"WILL SIZE YOU UP AS A CHEAP MAN."

100 100 100 100
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"A mere matter of taste," said the American. "I mean, you understand, as to whether or not it is worse than to be crushed out of all semblance of a man and left to serve as a shock to your friends. Of course, I can't speak from experience or even from credible hearsay, but it seems to me that after life is extinct I'd as soon go bounding through the jungle in the close corporation of a tiger's digestive society as to be spread out thin on the mountainside, to serve as food for the ungallant and cowardly buzzard, sir."

The Englishman arose, hooked himself together and strode off, remarking to some one that the Colonel might well call himself an American, for it was impossible to get any information out of him. In the meantime the American had turned about to comment on a phase of life in New York. "I notice," said he, "that of an evening the women are drinking wine and the men are shuddering over water as they sit together in the cafés. If you take a lady to supper you must buy wine for her, or the waiter will size you as a cheap man. And in a community where fighting is regarded as impolite, not to say immodest, this is uncomfortable. You people may be accus-

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tomed to it, but I don't like the cockney grunt of contempt. It strikes me that our Constitution was framed to relieve us of that sort of thing. The tipping, or rather petty bribing, system has sifted out into America, but here in New York it seems to have reached its climax. And you must not only hire the waiter to say 'thank you,' but must buy wine to maintain a place in his good opinion. It's well enough to talk of independence and to swear you won't do it; you will. There is nothing so tireless as insolence, and they will finally wear you out, those cockneys; and you are then willing to buy freedom from that grunt and that buttermilk eye. They have ruined the nigger, sir. Of course, it has always been the darky's game to play the polite and attentive for a tip, but they have made him insulting and imperative in his demand. And if you don't give him at least as much as ten per cent of the amount of your order he gives you the cockney stare. I'll be hanged if one of them didn't turn my overcoat and put it on me wrong side out."

"What did you do?" one of the ladies inquired.

"Do, madam? I didn't know it until I

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was shouted at in the street. I thought I was about to get run over and I jumped. Then a policeman came up and said: 'If you don't turn that coat right and sober up a little I'll run you in for drunkenness.' And realizing my plight, I explained, and what did the scoundrel do but laugh at me. I looked at my watch and found that it was then too late to go back to the restaurant and kill the brute."

The American bowed himself out, and nothing more was seen of him until late in the evening, when he came into the Turkish room. In a flutter the ladies made a place for him, and he declared that they had done him proud.

"I think," said he, as he sat down, "that I have passed a profitable day, not more so for myself than for the people in my country, whom I shall tell something of what I saw. I was out at Ellis Island, the place where the immigrants land, and I must say that I was profoundly and not altogether pleasantly impressed. Ladies, economics perhaps do not interest you, that is, at present; but some of you may move out to Colorado or to other States where the right of suffrage has been extended to your sex. And I wish to remark that every citizen in this country should be

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interested in Ellis Island. Once in a while the newspapers mention it; we are told that so many thousands landed this year or last year; and, occasionally, some Congressman, with an eye to the future, tells of the continuous inflow. But I wanted to see for myself, and I did. It was the first time that I ever contemplated the rawest material of which citizens are made, and I was not inspired with veneration for the statesmanship of forefathers who were so eager for increase in the young republic's inhabitants as to hold out an invitation not only to the oppressed but to the scum of the earth. A nation is but a family, and who would think of inviting into his household a degenerate and a fugitive from the justice of an older association?"

"But we should not shut our doors upon the needy and the suffering," spoke up a local politician.

"No, not upon the suffering—not surely upon those whose minds have been caged; but why should we be a hospital or at least an asylum for the pauper? It would be as wise to empty foreign prisons into this country's lap as to make voters of such material. This is as well known to the average politician as

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ballot-box stuffing was to the carpet-bagger, but the average politician is a moral coward. I beg your pardon, sir."

"Oh, go ahead, Colonel, and if you tell the truth about me, I'll grin and bear it," replied the politician.

"Sir, I thank you," said the Colonel, and thus he continued: "Shutting his eyes, the politician falls off into an oratorical swoon over the liberties granted by our glorious Constitution. To lubricate his joints anent the race for office he would stew the grease out of the Declaration of Independence. He would pluck the tail-feathers from the bird of freedom and stick them into the grimy hats of the newly naturalized. Out in a town where I lived, sir, they naturalized two thousand in one day."

"Is that a fact? And what came of it?"

"What came of it? Confound them, they beat me for mayor, sir."

"Ah, that was bad. But go ahead. We are getting information."

"I thank you, sir. As this is a gateway to America, every American ought to visit Ellis Island. It would give him a new view of the evil chances taken in our constant effort to as-

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simulate some of the worst elements of the human family. Statistics of immigration are sometimes quoted as an evidence of prosperity. But there is a vast difference between the influx of honest blood and the inoculation of criminal pauperism. Falstaff's recruits, with only a shirt and a half to a company, could boast of a complete wardrobe compared with some of the European outcasts that expect to be turned loose upon the shores of America. A few dollars in hand should not be set up as the gauge of admission. Money can be stolen, you know, and to a thief we might be offering the premium of citizenship. The psychologist should be present and the scientist ought to pass upon the quality of the candidate. Lax laws are criminal, and the future will hold us responsible for our looseness. I am told by the officials that sometimes out of the thousands of immigrants that land in a day at least one-half of the number are but adventurers who have no thought of remaining here. To their nature material production is more foreign than the shores they are about to pollute, and after an illegitimate levy upon the public they return to their former homes to spread the report of the ease

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and freedom granted to them in America. Sir, the negro problem in the South may be serious, but let the East look to Ellis Island."

"If you gentlemen are going to get into a political quarrel it is time for us to go," said one of the ladies, and the Colonel arose with a bow. "Madam, we are talking like brothers. You simply have misunderstood us. Sit down and let me tell you of the one time in my life when I held office." She smiled and sat down, and the Colonel continued, after warmly shaking hands with the local politician:

"It was in a rural community of the South that I was elected to the office of justice of the peace. I was not graced with any too much law, but I thought I knew what justice was, a fact proved by my first decision. One day a negro appeared and said that he wanted to bring suit for ten dollars against my old friend Jim Gordon, a planter who lived not far away. The plaintiff said that he didn't need a lawyer, that he was willing to leave it to me; so I sent for Jim and he came over, as mad as a hornet he was, too, when he found that he had been sued. 'Why, confound that nigger, I don't owe him a cent and never did,'

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said he. But I told him that justice was justice and therefore I must hear the nigger's story. 'It wuz disser way,' said he. 'It wuz a cold day, not long ago, an' I wuz er settin' on a stump down by de ribber, an' ez I looked at de skim o' ice along de sho' I 'lows ter merse'f dat I wuz monstus glad I didn't hatter git in dat water. 'Bout dat time yere come Mr. Gordon. He didn't say nuthin' till he dun set down on ernuder stump clost by me, an' den he take out er twenty-fi'-cent piece, an' den he 'low dat ober at de sto' dey had jest got in some licker, two drinks fur er quarter, dat would make a man smack his mouf all day. I tol' him I'd like mighty well ter hab at leas' one o' dem lickers but didn't 'sess de quarter. He 'lowed dat wuz bad an' I 'grees wid him. Den he looks at de quarter in his han' an' says he doan want it no longer an' flings it in de ribber. I didn't want ter git in dat col' water. He oughter knowed dat fack, but in he flung it, an' wid de taste o' dat licker already in my mouf I jumps in, an' I grabbles round till up I comes wid er han'ful o' mud an' in de mud wuz de twenty-fi' cents. I washes my han' an' de money an' strikes er trot fur de sto'. I axed

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de man 'hind de counter an' he say de licker wuz dar, an' I set my mouf fur two drinks an' tol' him to fetch 'em out. Den I put my money on de counter, 'fo' I got de licker, an' de man he tuck up de quarter, he did, sorter looked at it an' flung it back ter me wid de 'nouncement dat it wuz counterfeit. An' so it wuz, Jedge. Wall, suh, de disserp'intment tergeder wid de col' water makes me sick, an' I wuz in bed two weeks an' lost at least ten dollars, an' I now hol's dat dis yere Mr. Gordon he owe it ter me.'

"Then Gordon spoke up. 'Judge,' said he, 'I hold that a man has a right to throw a piece of pewter into the river whenever he has a mind to. So, I don't owe him any money.' He was my friend, Jim Gordon was, but, as I said before, justice was justice. 'Sir,' said I, 'you undoubtedly have a right to throw pewter into the river, and the law says that you have an equal right to throw your own quarters into the water, but equity, which, let me inform you, goes a little beyond law, declares that when a man throws a quarter into the river it must be a good quarter or he lays himself liable for making current a counterfeit. There-

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fore, you owe this nigger ten dollars.' And i'gad, I made him pay it.

"Will you gentlemen repair with me to the bar-room and join me in something soft? Ladies, I wish you good-night."

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CHAPTER I I I.

THE COLONEL MORALIZES OVER THE GREAT HUMAN TIDE.

As voiced by the bellow of the great bells old Time's wheel had slipped four cogs, signal for the homeward rush, and the American in New York stood at the Manhattan end of the Brooklyn bridge. In the contemplation of a mighty crowd the developed soul is stirred to rebellion. In the crowd the mind may be more active, but it is narrower. Solitude is breadth; man makes many noises but creative nature lives in silence. Silence was the beginning and silence must be the end of all, and to look upon the nightmare of this troubled dream of life, knowing that its struggles are but gestures made wild in the meaningless air, depresses and takes from us that keen nerve, that live wire of ambition that inspires to action. Such were the thoughts of the Colonel as he watched the tide flowing across the bridge, but with a shake he roused himself! "Come now," he mused. "That is the way an old man thinks. The world is real and the sun

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is its lamp and the moon is its evening sentiment. America, even in its discovery, refuted the belief that the world had seen its best day. The forces of creation are ever new and we learn more from the ringing hammer than from the aging moralist, sitting half blind in his darkened chamber. But why should the mind grow old? Can any one trace its beginning, and therefore, who should attempt to trace its end?"

Before taking his meditative stand at the bridge the Colonel had moralized in an old churchyard where headstones were crumbling beneath the touch of flowing years. It was an odd sight to him, these ash-heaps of the past in the midst of the roaring furnaces of the present, and it made him sad, the nothingness of it all; and he had come to the bridge to look upon the fullest tide of American life. And here were myriads of faces without the illumination of an ennobling thought—sheep rushing to the slaughter of inevitable circumstance, souls dwarfed by the narrowing stress of merciless obligation. But amid those myriads an occasional lamp was carried by, a mind radiating its light, a philosopher forced out of his contemplative pace; and in sombre garb were

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seen the noble and self-sacrificing, the father, the mother—the unmarked hero of some crisis yet to come. Ah, those face-pages, what a book! Sublimity, stupidity, comedy, tragedy—life. Tear out a thousand of these pages and to-morrow the book would seem just as thick. But in the homes the poems and the psalms would be missed, sonnets unknown to the public and destined forever to remain unread by the crowd. How illustrative of us all, this swift channel flowing high in the air, this aqueduct of human currents. Nothing is of avail except as it causes us to halt and to think, for when we do think we are kindlier and thereby the world is made better. An invention is a thought and a kind deed is a part of true education.

The muser turned away, bettered by this sermon which he had preached unto himself, and he thought of the millions upon millions of acres to the westward where those struggling souls would be welcomed and freed. An overpowering sense of his own smallness came upon him, and he wondered how any man who existing thus as a grain of sand in a whirlwind could fancy himself greater than his fellows. But when he got down into the street where

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the crowd had thinned out his sense of individuality returned. It requires but a moment for self-assertive nature to come back to us, again to beset us with whims and vanities; and, indeed, without them there would be no humor, no literature.

Millionaire Lane of the Waldorf Hotel was in the glory of its evening swell. And what a different tide from that which flowed across the bridge. Here fashion was gathered, women with white skin gleaming, and men prim in elegance but powerful in the apparent thought that they had fought, had won and were among the conquerers of the world. We wonder how it would feel to be able to draw an honorable check for ten millions, and upon the man whom wealth alone has granted international fame we gaze speculating as to how he feels. He is afflicted, he shakes with palsy, he is tottering toward the magnificent tomb the plan of which he has just approved, and still there is about him a power which our own struggle and disappointment compel us to recognize. He crosses the bridge, not on hastening foot, but in sweeping chariot, and those of the scramblers who do not get out of his way are likely to be crushed; but one of his

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chariots will move slowly and naught save his kinsman, the worm, is in danger of being run over by the wheels. But is he not weary, and may he not be as willing to ride in that last chariot as some of the rest of us? It does not seem so. Trace back the lengthened thread of his life and wonder at his beginning, a poor boy, teaching a country school. Did he follow the precepts in his books, or did he make precepts of his own? Was there a guide to tell him how to speculate in stocks, to bring about panic to cause distress? Can there be true democracy until his power—his mythical power to shake the financial earth—is gone? Look at that beautiful woman: money spiritualized, she seems. Did she ever hear of the German poetess who was found in the potato-field and summoned blushing and afraid to the court of the emperor? The Colonel looked at her as he sat by the wall, and he said to an acquaintance who made it an evening custom to watch the gorgeous parade: "I think I saw her the other day, out riding with her dog."

"Happy dog," replied the acquaintance.

"Well, not wholly," said the American.

"While she was waiting for the policeman to

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clear a way through the jamming carriages the dog leaped out and was immediately seized by a cur that broke away from a boy's string. For a moment the air was full of ribbons. The lady shrieked, and the policeman, knowing his duty, ran to the rescue of the wallowed pug. If such a thing had not been impossible the cur would have made the pug's face uglier than it was. I never saw such a shaking. Usually I am for the under dog in the fight, but on this occasion, sir, I was for the upper one. I said to myself, 'Madam, the sweetest and most appealing smile of a beautiful child might not so nearly concern you as the sneeze of that brute. Let him take it and I'm glad he got it.' I shall not go so far as to say that she kissed him when he was lifted back into the carriage, but if I did it wouldn't be a lie, sir. Ah, look through the doorway at that old chap at the bar. See him shudder. He is trying to ease himself down from a height he attained yesterday. He puts me in mind of an old fellow I saw in Louisville.

"Early one morning I went into the hotel bar and the thought struck me that I had need of ice-cold buttermilk. About the time the bartender put it out in came the old citi-

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zen. His hair looked like newly-ginned cotton and in his cheeks there were broken veins. 'Billy,' he said to the bartender, 'make me a cocktail.' The bartender cracked his ice, clapped his tin thing on a tumbler and shook out the drink, poured it into a glass, sugared the rim, hooked on a piece of lemon peel and placed it before his customer. The old man reached for it but suddenly drew back with a sort of jolt. The memory of the night before was a little too much for him. He turned about, looked at the pictures on the wall, whistled a few notes from an opera, and, again facing the bar, put out his fumbly hand, but again there came the jolt, deep from within. Then, glancing at me, he said to the bartender: 'Billy, give me some buttermilk.' The milk was set out for him. He took the glass, drank half of the contents, which, upon my word of honor, sir, I could hear sizzling, and then he spoke to me: 'I beg your pardon, sir, you being a stranger to me, but I was just thinking what a shame it is that this stuff won't make a man drunk.' "

A page came up and told the Colonel that a number of his acquaintances were in the Turkish room, waiting for him to tell them a

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story, and inquiring the name of the man who sat beside him, he conducted him in and introduced him, of course, as his old and valued friend. "You have honored me," said the American, bowing to the men and most graciously smiling upon the ladies, and then, seating himself, he continued: "I don't know that I have a story, but to-day as I gazed upon a great moving mass of humanity I thought that not in all the community which has cast by environment such countenances was there one of those peculiar individuals known as typical American characters. I remember at this moment an old fellow whom I shall speak of as Uncle John, the oracle of a rural neighborhood, shrewd with the opinion that in his own observation was a world of knowledge. Not long ago he returned from a visit to Chicago, and in the crossroads grocery store, the forum of his wisdom, he took his seat near the stove. About him soon gathered a number of his friends—Jim Horn, horse-trader and general liar of the community; Uncle Bill Butterworth, recorder of the late and early frosts; Tom Malone, a neighborhood drunkard, who reformed every fall and fell every spring—together with a number of others whom neither

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age nor experience warranted in asserting their identity.

“ ‘Well, Uncle John,’ said Malone, ‘you’ve got back, I see.’

“ ‘Yes, in a measure, Tommy. Hain’t been drunk since I left?’

“ ‘No, and ain’t goin’ to drink no more.’

“ ‘Shake on that, Tommy,’ and according to well-worn custom they shook hands to celebrate the reformation. ‘Yes,’ said Uncle John, ‘got back and mighty glad of it, for there ain’t no place on this earth that can equal Jefferson Corners. And I’ve been about a good bit, I tell you. And while I was in town, a-visitin’ my married daughter, boys, I seen Richard the Third.’

“With brightening interest Tommy looked up and said: ‘Richard the Third. He made it in about one-thirty-six, didn’t he?’

“ ‘Made what?’

“ ‘A mile.’

“ ‘A mile!’

“ ‘Yes; ain’t you talkin’ about a hoss?’

“ ‘No, sir, I ain’t. I’m talkin’ about Shakespeare.’

“ ‘Oh, excuse me,’ said Tommy, ‘but when a man comes a-talkin’ about Jay Eye Sees and

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Richard Thirds, I jest nachully puts it down that he's talkin' about a hoss.'

" 'Shakespeare,' said Uncle Bill Butterworth. 'Ah, hah. My granddaughter's schoolbook's got somethin' in it writ by him. Came across it t'uther day, and he writes fair enough, but he can't spell alongside of my granddaughter. But go ahead with what you was a-goin' to say, Uncle John.'

" 'All right. You see, this was the first time I have visited my daughter since she married that Board of Trade man. Sorter skittish about goin', but I went. And he's all right, my son-in-law is—ain't proud—don't occupy more than half the house he lives in. Why, Tommy, it's a quarter of a mile high and I don't know how long; don't pretend to climb the stairs; hoisted up in a cage—s-s-s-shee—and you're there, either up or down, as the case may be.

" 'Well, first night after I got there, about the time we got through supper, son-in-law asks me if I am fond of the drama. And I told him that I had dranked a good deal of hard cider and a Tom and Jerry now and then, but couldn't say I was married to it beyond the possibility of divorce. And then he laughed,

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he did, and said he didn't mean anything to drink; not a dram, but the drama, the theatre. Then I laughed and told him yes. And I wanted him to understand, too, that I knowed a good deal about the theatre business, for once when an Uncle Tom's Cabin company played at the Corners I furnished two of the slats for Little Eva's death-bed. And this pleased him—goned if it didn't please him till it appeared like he was glad he had married my daughter. And then he told me to come on down with him and we'd see Richard the Third. He didn't say nothin' about my daughter goin', and I thought to myself that maybe it wa'n't for wimmin folks, but that didn't cripple me none to speak of, so I told him all right, a-gittin' keener every minute. When we'd got into the cage and dropped down to the bed-rock passage son-in-law asked me if I didn't want to smoke as we went downtown, and as I was a-goin' to a show a leetle too nippy for wimmin to attend I thought I might as well swaller the whole shootin' match, and I told him so in words befitin' of the occasion. Gentlemen, I reckon you have seen what you thought was segars, but you never saw such as son-in-law bought for me.

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Jest about the size of a bench-leg in a district school, and had a gold band around it, rated in price at five cents of any man's money; and I felt that nobody but bankers and Board of Trade men could afford to smoke such goods, but I didn't let on—fired up one end and got on the outside of a car and puffed jest like I was borned and raised in the town. Never had a cigar to keep me so busy. And putty soon I seen why it must have cost so much. It would smoke up one side jest half and then you could go back and light the other half.

“ ‘Well, after a while we got to the show-house, and it was all lit up outside, but I didn't bat an eye. Son-in-law told me to throw away my cigar and I hesitated, knowin' that I could smoke t'uther half goin' back, but I flung it out in the street and it bounced around red like a chunk of fire. After gittin' seated I looked up, and right in front of the platform what they call the stage there was as putty a curtain as you ever seen, all painted yaller and red and blue, but it didn't strike me that it was intended for wimmin to look at along at the same time with men. It represented a barge a-comin' down the river, and in it sorter lay back a putty lady powerful scant of clothes

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and some half-naked niggers was a-holdin' feather dusters over her. Son-in-law said it was Cleopatry a-goin' to meet a feller named Ant'ny, and I 'lowed she put me in mind of a woman that was a-goin' to replevin her duds. He snorted and told me to hush.

“ ‘Well, then the horn-blowers and the fiddlers come out, and they done right well, considering that there was so many of them. When they got through with this the curtain was pulled up and there was the feller they called Richard the Third. And it was plain to be seen that murder was his game, for at this particular time he wa'n't king, but was a putty powerful candidate for the office, for it appeared like that mighty nigh everybody what was dead he killed 'em. I thinks to myself that they had to look a long time to find a man of that shape, and the bill-of-fare said he was great, and mebby he was. Well, it wa'n't long till things began to warm up. And here come a funeral to make it natural. This here Richard had killed a king that had been shut up in the round-house—no, the Tower, I believe they called it—and the king's daughter-in-law, the wife of a prince, a good-lookin' woman named Ann, she come along a-

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mournin' like, and Richard he steps out and told the hired hands to put down the deceased, and they done it. And then Mis' Prince she begins to abuse him.

" 'I know that when the average woman puts her mind on it she can say a good many mean things, fust and last, but I never heard a woman that could equal this one. Put me in mind of a feller that told the jedge in the old story that he could addle a whole roomful of goose-eggs by lookin' through the key-hole. There wa'n't nothin' she didn't call him, but he stood there with a smile like he had jest licked up some sorghum molasses. She accused him of killin' the deceased and he didn't deny it, but smiled at her, and then she thought she would give him a stunner by accusin' him of killin' her husband. But he didn't deny that, either. Told her he loved her so he couldn't keep from killin' him—wanted to help her to a better husband—and she spit at him like a cat. She swore he ought to be dead, and he drawed his sword and handed it to her, and she took it and made at him, and I yelled out, "Dodge, you fool!" But he didn't. She let the sword drap and 'lowed she couldn't kill him. Then he grabbed

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the sword and said he would kill himself if she said the word, but she shook her head and told him to get up and he said he would never get up till she promised to marry him, and boys, you may not believe it when I tell you, but blamed if she didn't promise right there! Yes, and he sent her one way and the deceased the other, and then tittered fitten to kill himself.

“ ‘Well, every once in a while they'd drop the curtain and show the niggers a-holdin' the feather dusters over the woman that was so scant of clothes, and with each time things warmed up more and more. Richard had a cousin named Buckingham, and he says to him, says he, “Buck, you help me to be king and ther ain't no tellin' what I won't do for you,” and Buck 'lowed he was with him, and he was for a good while—helped him put out of the way fust one and then the other; but after the real king died and he wanted Buck to go to the Tower and murder the two princes, Buck he quibbled. Richard told him he oughtn't to stick at a little thing like that, but Buck said he wa'n't feelin' very well that mornin' and didn't believe he'd do it; and he didn't. He

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grabs his sword and rushes out to join the enemy that was comin' to fight Richard.'

"The old man was silent for a time and then went on: 'And, boys, I dreamed about that show, and along toward mornin' of the last night I was there I dreamt that the niggers was a-holdin' feather dusters over me, and I awoke sudden and grabbed somethin' and give it a wring and a twist—and it was my daughter's parrot that had come in and was on my pillow a-ticklin' my ear with his tail. I wa'n't more than half awake, you understand, and I killed the thing. Yes, and I didn't know what to do—didn't know how to apologize, for I never had killed a parrot before. But suddenly a thought struck me. I would put it in my valise and take it away and nobody would be the wiser. I put it in on top of my shirts and went out to breakfast, and while we were eating daughter she wondered what had become of Polly, but of course I didn't let on. Well, as I was a-starting off daughter called me to stop, and then here she come with a small bundle which she said she wanted me to take home for her mother. I told her all right, that I would put it in my pocket, but she said no, I would leave it on

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the train like I left some calico once. She declared she must put it in my valise. I hollered out against it, you may bet, but she grabbed the valise, opened it, and then she tuck out the parrot and lookin' at me, said: "Oh, poor Polly, poor Polly!" And then I says, "Yes, poor Polly, for when they git into my carpet-bag unbeknownst to me and touch that spring lock it kills 'em every time." Son-in-law followed me down to the rock passage, put his arm around me, handed me a fifty-dollar note, and said: "This is to keep that spring lock in good workin' order and to pay your way back here when she gits another parrot." ' ' "

"He was an old rascal," said one of the ladies when the Colonel had finished. "Ah, that may be," replied the American, bowing; "but, as our friend Bacon would say, 'A little rascality, like the alloy in gold, makes character work easier and therefore renders it more enjoyable.' "

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CHAPTER I V.

THE AMERICAN TELLS THE STORY OF MINNIE WATKINS.

Alone the Colonel sat in the Turkish room of the Waldorf Hotel. On a chair beside him were a number of newspapers rumbled into a jagged pyramid, showing that when he put them down the American's manner was not stately or composed. From them he sat back in a deep muse, oblivious of the comely girl who came in lightly to dust about the room, and the fact that to her he paid no attention proved him to be in a most unusual state of mind, for, as he himself was wont to say, the sudden appearance of "calico" always drove away the hawks and supplied their place with gentler birds of thought, the doves of the soul. It will require more of education to prove to the gallant Southerner that all women are not angels than it will to convince the average foreigner that any of them are worthy of that distinction. Once, at a hotel in Denver, a chambermaid was caught by the house detective in the act of robbing the Colonel's

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room. She was taken to court, a fifty-dollar banknote was found secreted in her sleeve, and the magistrate was about to pass sentence of imprisonment upon her when the Colonel spoke up. "Wait a moment, Judge. Let me see that bill," and when with pretended closeness he had looked at the note he started with surprise and cried out: "Why, this is the one I gave her, and she couldn't have stolen what was already her own."

"The one you gave her," said the magistrate, scratching his head.

"Yes—for a debt. You see, my brother used to run a hotel out at Colorado Springs. He failed, on account of sickness, and I might say death—to be exact—to pay his help. He owed this girl!—let's see, miss, what is your name?"

"Minnie Watkins," she whimpered.

From his left-hand pistol pocket the Colonel took a notebook, and after turning several leaves, cried out: "Ah, your honor, she is right. Minnie Watkins is the name. I paid her before I verified it, a careless habit I dropped into while engaged in raising cotton in the South, being somewhat busy at the time, and am now pleased to find that

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she is truthful as well as honest. Now, therefore, your honor, I move you, sir, in the absence of any other business before the house, that the prisoner be honorably discharged."

To this procedure the city prosecuting attorney objected to the extent that it was not in regular process, and upon him the Colonel turned in thunderous wrath. "Sir, is your soul no bigger than a technicality of the law? And, your honor, is justice to be crippled and made to go lame while attorneys indulge the jumping-jack quibblings of a dwarfed understanding? 'No, sir,' cries out the American people, and therefore I insist upon the motion."

The motion was carried, the prisoner discharged, and as the Colonel came up beside her in the street she said to him: "They gave me back the fifty dollars. What must I do with it?"

"Miss, you must retain it to prove that I am not a liar. And remember this: Never catch a gentleman in a lie if you can help it. It not only looks bad, but if by chance he is inclined to be sensitive it might worry him somewhat." He told her that he would talk

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to the hotel proprietor in her behalf, would demand, in fact, that she should not be discharged; and he did, and when everything had been adjusted he found opportunity to say to her: "My dear—pardon the familiarity, but you must know that financial relations are sometimes the closest of kin—I don't understand how one with so innocent a looking face could be dishonest, and if I were you I should make an attempt to live up to the promises of my countenance. Every lady ought to be honest. If she isn't, how can she expect her husband to be a gentleman?"

The girl promised that she would be honest, even if it killed her, and he replied that he didn't think it would be that bad; and it wasn't, for several years afterward, when he found her the wife of a well-to-do man in Seattle and the presiding genius of a hotel, she appeared never to have suffered from her effort. They were glad to see each other; the Colonel began to talk of old friends whom they had not known in common, of our old Jones and of Miss Elizabeth and the like, and while the reunion was at its height the husband broke in—well, not exactly in the conversation, being a man who seemed to hoard

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his words, but interrupted the proceedings long enough to hand fifty dollars to the Colonel, who, in an outburst of most gallant surprise, exclaimed:

“And may I ask what this is for?”

The husband blinked as if the sun were in his eyes, and said: “Money my wife owed you when you worked for her in Denver.”

He dropped back, to hoard up his words, and the wife, being more extravagant, gushed forth: “Oh, it’s all right, Colonel. I told him all about it even before he gave me a position of trust—noticed that I was successful in my attempt to be honest, and about six months afterward he got together words enough to ask me to be his wife.” The husband blinked as if he had reached the summit of the greatest joke of his life, the very Pike’s Peak of humor; but the Colonel hemmed and hawed, believing that he ought to say something appropriate, and finally he remarked: “Madam, if he knows all about it there is no further need of polite disguise, and now permit me to say that I am convinced you took the money to administer to the distress of a mother or of some other near relative.”

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"No," she spoke up, "I wanted to buy a cloak with it. Every other woman appeared to have one, and I felt that I had been cheated; but I know now that such a garment would freeze me, and I thank you for my ability to keep warm."

"Warm," said the husband, throwing away a word that he had intended to keep. She was standing beside him at the time, and affectionately she ran her hand through his brush-broom hair, and a ring on her finger glowed like a glowworm in the autumn grass. It was but natural that this should make a deep impression upon the Colonel, and he went his way, glad when he thought of the part he had played in the little drama. And it was natural, too, that this experience should in the future soften him toward all women accused of crime, if indeed he could be made softer than he was, and it is undeniably responsible for his creed that all women are honest, more or less, according to the degree of fascination in which they are held by cloaks and other articles of finery. He often declared that no woman would steal without sufficient cause, or without what she honestly believed was sufficient cause;

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that she was not naturally depraved, but was irresistibly influenced by the gorgeous appearance of her more fortunate sisters; that her sisters were gorgeous to please man, and that, therefore, man was the cause of it all.

So when the Colonel did not look up from his set-eyed abstraction upon the coming of the chambermaid something unwonted must have arisen to throw him deep down into a state of forgetfulness. The girl was disappointed, as she was accustomed to receive a tip whenever she smiled at the American, and she coughed, a modest little distress she had cultivated for the Colonel's benefit, but he did not look up. She went out, wondering what the matter could be; and then along came a doctor, not the house physician, but a man who had practiced in New York years ago, who had married a wealthy girl, lost her money in speculation, and who now made a show of prosperity by appearing regularly at the Waldorf. He knew the Colonel well—that is, as well as a man of his pretentious stamp cares to know one not belonging to the golden circle—and he halted and spoke to the American. With a flounce the Colonel tumbled out of his muse, arose, dusted his

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trousers, a habit the Southerner has from his long continued custom of sitting upon the stumps and stones of his plantation, grasped the Doctor by the hand and shook it with fervor. "Doctor," said he, "I beg your pardon for not seeing you sooner. Sit down."

The Doctor said that he was very, very kind, sat down and inquired as to how the world was using him, which meant if he were well in London and New York. The Colonel said that he was well, or would be in America, but that as he was still a stranger in New York he didn't know exactly how he felt. This was a humor too sly for the Doctor, for no matter how refined the New Yorker may be, there are little sun glints of drollery too delicate for him. This was not always so, and it has come latterly from his habit of cultivating British dullness.

"You seemed just now to be completely in the possession of some hypnotic force," said the Doctor, and the Colonel snorted and swore that he had been. "Look here," said he, shaking his fist at the pile of newspapers. "Look at these things that some people call the leading newspapers of America. There are five of them, and out of the hundreds of

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columns there is scarcely a word about America. Look at this one; five columns on the first page from London—parties, receptions, scandals of dukes and lords; three-quarters of a column about a storm in Devonshire where no one was mortally hurt, and only a few lines given to a town out West completely destroyed by the wind.”

The Doctor smiled. “Newspapers print what they have reason to know will please their readers,” said he.

“Yes,” cried the Colonel, “and they have been educated to want foreign stuff. How can you expect people to be patriotic when they know nothing about their own country?”

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders. “Oh, patriotism,” said he, “is a mere matter of narrowness. It is an evidence of the fact that a man has not traveled. Indeed, you might say that it is a lack of education. To be what is usually known as a patriot one must believe that his country, his home, is the best spot on earth, and that his friends and neighbors are the best people in the world. Traveling dispels that notion.”

The Colonel clapped his hand over his

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mouth to keep from roaring. "And, sir, when a man travels he must make it an object to find that all other countries are better than his own, and that the country which is most aristocratic is the one most worthy of imitation."

"Not necessarily," the Doctor yawned. "But I should like to ask if it isn't well to imitate the one that has the most experience in the affairs of life and is therefore the most remote from crudity?"

"I grant you," cried the Colonel, "that is, if we are to imitate at all—but why imitate? Isn't it shallow and a sign of inherent weakness to strive toward a catching of what others possess, only in so far as we can copy their wisdom and their virtue? But isn't it a fact that when we copy we find that we have gathered only a foolish harvest of foibles? America is great to-day not because she has aped but because she is original. And though out in America we have a most profound admiration for respectability, yet we have learned to know that a man is not respectable or wise or a useful citizen simply because he is the offshoot of a family that was prominent in society. I have had a few

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of my own prejudices knocked on the head, and I have learned that work and accomplishment are the true virtues of civilization. Sir," and the Colonel began to walk up and down the room, "you regard the Government patronage of this town as of more importance than all the affairs in Washington, and many of you cast your votes accordingly. I met a well known politician the other day who boasted that he had never been West. Has ignorance become a virtue, and is your blue-book rating of a man governed by his narrowness of view?"

"Sit down, Colonel. You people from the outside take yourselves too seriously. You've got a sort of intellectual indigestion. Mountains and alkali water have made you nervous, and you look at New York with your accustomed grain of sand in the eye. There may be some truth in your wrath. In all madness there is truth, just as there is a sort of philosophy in all religion. But you are compelled to go away from New York, feeling that here is where the heart of the nation beats."

"Sir," exclaimed the Colonel, "this is a gambling house, and in such places the heart

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does beat fast, I tell you. I remember a fellow named Brady that came into Deadwood. He had with him a small bag of Black Hills gold, and he had nerves of steel wire. From the very start he began to win. They changed dealers on him time and again, but luck was with him. Sitting beside him was a man that had lost everything. He tried to follow Brady's bets, but lost just the same. After a while he shoved back and said: 'Well, I'm broke.' That wasn't an announcement so startling as to cause any unusual excitement—I' gad, I was broke myself, but said nothing about it. But this chap kept on insisting that he was done for. A Chinaman stood behind him, and the dealer said to him, 'Git up and let the gentleman sit down.' The fellow looked around and saw the Chinaman, and as he arose he remarked to the dealer: 'I'll take that, as I'm broke, but if I had ten dollars I'd maul you for it. Brady did not look up, but reaching back he said: 'Here's ten. Maul him.' The fellow took the ten, bought chips with it, and then struck the dealer a blow between the eyes and tumbled him out of the chair. But that made no difference, as it was about time to change dealers

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again. For a time the unlucky chap won, but along came a swipe that swept him off the board. 'Pardner, you seem to be pretty well fixed,' he said to Brady:

" 'Yep; doing fairly well.'

" 'You don't know me, do you?'

" 'Hope not,' said Brady.

" 'Well, a man can know a good many worse fellows than I am.'

" 'Well, he might,' said Brady. 'What's your name—at the present?'

" 'Joe Cates. Ever hear of me?'

" 'Might have.'

" 'Ever hear of me strong enough to lend me a hundred?'

" 'No; my hearing ain't that good since I had the yaller janders.'

" 'How about fifty?'

" 'Good-night,' said Brady. But the fellow wouldn't go. It's harder to pull up the white oak sapling than the little black bull whets his horn against than it is to jerk a fellow out of a gambling house as long as even the vaguest hope tells him that there's a chance to get back into the game, and he continued to stand there. Brady asked him if he had anything he could put up. 'No,'

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he said; 'I've lost everything. Wish I hadn't stopped here. Was on my way through this wolf-den to git married out about fifty miles beyond. Had to stop to get the license.'

" 'Got it with you now?' Brady inquired, and the fellow said he had. Brady took the license, and as he was throwing his eye on the document the fellow said: 'You ought to have sentiment enough about you to let me have at least a hundred on that piece of paper.' Brady studied a while, paying no attention to the game, and said, 'Yes, marriage is a lottery, and this is the ticket.' Then he added: 'I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll let you have a hundred if you'll agree to give me this paper and give me the option on your life if you go back to the clerk and get out another draft of the same statement.'

" 'I love the girl,' the fellow moaned, and Brady held forth the paper, but he didn't take it. 'Give me the hundred,' he said, and Brady gave him the chips. The deal went on, but Brady didn't play long after that. He cashed in, and as he and I were going along the street he said to me: 'Didn't give myself away when I looked at that license, did I?'

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“ ‘How?’ I asked.

“ ‘Didn’t start nor nothing?’

“ ‘No. What makes you ask?’

“ ‘Why, as soon as I looked at the document I saw that the lout was going to marry my sister. And as I’ve got the drop on him I reckon I’ve saved her a lifetime of trouble.’ And it turned out to be a fact, for this fellow, Joe Cates, was as woolly a scoundrel as ever crossed a sheep ranch; murdered a peddler, sir, and I had the pleasure of reading an exceedingly well written account of the ceremonies incident to his hanging.

“ ‘What became of Brady’s sister? Well, some time later I met her in Denver, at a hotel, but didn’t know who she was until several years afterward. At the time I met her she called herself Minnie Watkins, and she is now the fortunate wife of a hotel man who has as few words as the protagonist of a pantomime. Brady was quite a character, first and last, and I hear that he’s going to bring out a book of his sermons pretty soon. Yes, he is a preacher, and he makes sinners think that it is a constant show-down, and I reckon it is. But that has nothing to do with our argument, and I beg your pardon for

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drifting off. A man who is a citizen of a country and is not proud of it is not entitled to share in the glory of his nation. When you speak of New York as America, as the Parisian speaks of Paris as being France, you are ridiculous. You set no fashions, but get your customs from abroad."

"Not all, Colonel, for in some things you must admit that we are original."

"Yes; in a very few things, and in justice to you I must make a correction of the statement that your social customs are foreign. A few of them have been most strikingly original, such, for instance, as the tailoring of a monkey into the semblance of a man and making him the guest of honor at a dinner. It is not recorded that London was ever so wantonly new, and we may with certainty set it down as a fact that Paris would not indulge in so fitting a parody upon its own physique. Sir, I am told that where there is great wealth there must also be great eccentricity, and this reminds me that it was a Frenchman and not a monkey who said that monarchies are ruined by poverty and republics by wealth. And I wish to observe that when wealth becomes so aimless and so

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thoughtless as to be eccentric it is almost a moral criminal. And with her wealth, is it New York's province to ruin the republic? I know that such questions are ancient, but ancient Commonwealths were ruined. I don't know what you adhere to, sir, but out in the 'broad-bosomed air' of true America we still believe in the immortality of the soul."

"Crude," yawned the Doctor.

"We believe in the eternal life of the beautiful."

"Of the prairie-dog," said the Doctor.

"Ah, and that is the way you answer all of our arguments, sir."

"No, not all," said the Doctor. "The fact is that New York doesn't make a pretense of answering half of the questions put to her by—well, let us say, the provinces. And that is a term that sticks in the crop of you out-of-towners. But before you rage against me, let me ask if all barbarians who went to Rome didn't criticise her?"

"And let me ask if all of them didn't have cause?"

"But, Colonel, haven't you made friends in New York?"

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"Friends? Sir, I haven't made even an enemy."

The American strode out of the room, scowled at the dustgirl who coughed pathetically for a tip, repented, gave her twenty-five cents, and went away grumbling; but his mutterings were more like the humming of an old tune than a complaint, and he went out into the street to be jostled and shouted at and to ponder over the past, the sunlight on the meadow and of the moon gleaming on the path that ran down to the murmuring spring, so many years ago.

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CHAPTER V.

THE WIDOW.

Among the guests at the Wäldorf Hotel there was, of course, a handsome widow. Without her no hotel could presume to be famous. She is almost as essential to the social success of a hotel as to the life and thrilling qualities of a divorce suit; and in both instances her beauty is enhanced, if not wholly created, by the noise and the dust kicked up by her reputed wealth. In certain quarters of New York no one of any acknowledged judgment would pretend to a youth or complexion rating of a widow's beauty. This is largely true of all communities, but in New York it is not only essentially but almost desperately true. There is a brief quotation, not out of a sacred book, but evolved from man's profane experience—something expressive of one not having any more show than a cat in Hades without claws; and in Gotham a moneyless widow who makes pretenses to beauty was heard to declare that if she were to exchange places

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with the clawless cat she would find food for self-congratulatory reflection.

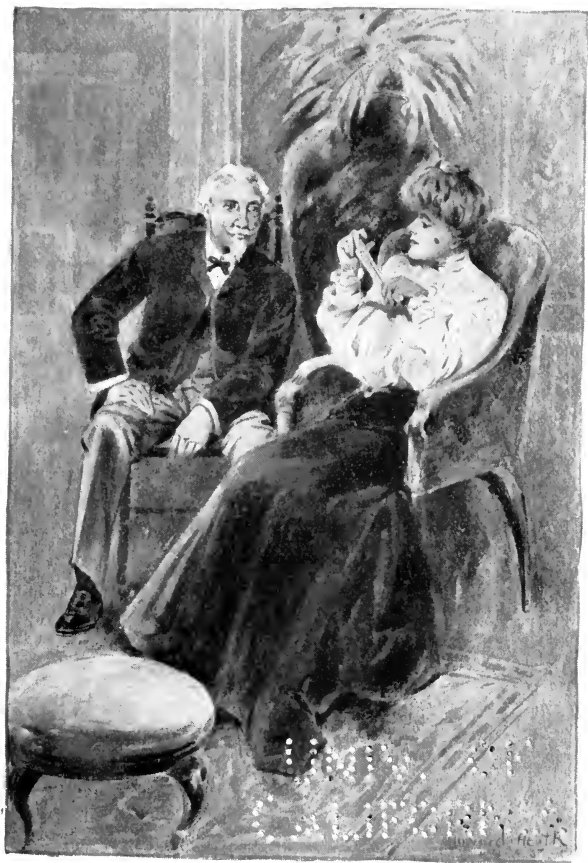
Such was the report that had been spread concerning her, every one believing that a handsome and rich widow's husband must have been old and wheezy, but the truth was that about this woman's "man," as they say on the prairies, New York knew next to nothing.

But this widow at the Waldorf was rich, and, being rich, she was free; and, in spite of her position, she was a woman of common-sense. It may have been that she remembered the time when she picked up chips to keep her mother's washpot boiling, and such a recollection, even though inlaid with bitterness against the world, is never wholly devoid of heart. This woman had seen enough of society to become just a trifle weary of it. Scarcely any of its promises had been kept. She found that society was a youth who never grew old, but who forced age upon its votaries.

When the Colonel strode across her pathway she made no disguise of the attractiveness that he held for her. She asked for an introduction, and she charmed him with a

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laugh; a studied impulse of melody, a musical instrument running riot in the hands of a master. She saw the humor in his repeated declaration that he was an American in New York, and those who believe that woman has no sense of humor have misjudged her character. The difference between her humor and that of a man is marked, it is true; a man sometimes laughs at his own misfortunes, while a woman never laughs genuinely at herself. The fact is that woman has enough to make her serious. She has man, and that ought to hold her for a while. The Colonel came with his foibles pinned on his coat, like a rose, she said. He was so natural, so humorous in an unconscious way—so deliciously pretentious in his wisdom. "I wouldn't be surprised if I ain't a little old-fashioned," he said; and then, after a few moments of reflection, he added: "And I don't know why, either, since I have been revolutionized to the extent of wearing collars that button on the shirt. Yes, and I thought I was a good bit in fashion until I came here and was condemned by the hollow eye of the velvet-footed importation from London, that red-breeched censure of all laughter, that physical quietus



"BEEN A WIDOW LONG, MA'AM?"

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to all Americanism. I have bought him twice, but, i'gad, madam, he won't stay bought. Think of living in an atmosphere with the life chilled out of it by such a social iceberg. I'd rather drink boiled water and breathe the mist of a geyser. If they want real servants why don't they get a few train-loads of darkies from the South? But I beg your pardon. It doesn't behoove a man to go abroad and criticise the ancient customs of the people. Been a widow very long, ma'am?"

She shrugged her graceful shoulders. "Perhaps it doesn't *seem* so long as it is."

"Oh! And I take it, then, that you must be enjoying yourself fairly well." And when she had prettily nodded at him he added: "I reckon that in this day of topsyturviness it puts a woman out a good deal to marry for love. Rather gone out of style, but, come to look at it closer, it never was a rage. Some of the oldest books tell us that women have ceased to marry for love. But I reckon they make less pretense now than ever before."

"Some women marry for freedom," she said, and he gave her a quick look.

"You don't tell me? But I shouldn't think

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that the freedom could be anything to speak of until the obstructions are cleared away. I take it, however, that she makes it a sort of a point to see in the first place that the obstructions ain't very likely to last long. Yes, marriage on the part of 'oman requires some little judgment. And don't you think it would be an advance in the proper direction if, instead of sounding him as to character, she'd get the opinion of a physician as to his probable hold on things down here?"

"Colonel, you aren't so old-fashioned. But supposing that you are, don't you know that it is a positive charm to meet an old-fashioned man? He comes like a forgotten romance, and his spirit is refreshing and sometimes his words are wise. Did you think that all New York women are materialists?"

"I thought it took a good deal of material to fit 'em out. No, I must say that I am strongly impressed by them. I always understood from what I'd read that a woman, in order to be anything in what is called the best society, must be marked not only by a lack of thought but by a positive silliness. But I reckon it requires about as much sense to be a leader among women as among men.

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It's no light thing to carry a social primary. And you've got to look out for the highflyers that intimidate the polls with their wealth. At any sort of election a financial heeler is a dangerous article. Out in some of the Western States the women vote. That is a bold advance in Americanism, and I am free to say that I regard it not only as a bold but as a proper advance."

"And do the women hold office out there?" she inquired.

"Oh, yes; and why shouldn't they, when they are the shrewdest of politicians? I know one, a judge, whose decisions have a high rating; and, but for one thing, she might attain to the Supreme Bench."

"And what is that one obstacle, Colonel?"

"Madam, she is inclined to be a flirt; and out there, where they adhere to common-law practice, a flirtatious judge is hardly the proper thing. Blackstone, in all the marvelous sweep of his Commentaries, didn't contemplate such a thing. Hearts are constantly on trial before this woman judge, and, after all, a good heart means innocence. Seriously, though, I believe that the one who makes the home ought to be permitted to vote. No

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matter how prosperous a man may be—how much money he brings into the house—he can't make a home. That highest of all offices depends upon the woman. And surely the home ought to have a voice."

She smiled at him. "Colonel, I am inclined to think that your conviction comes from your gallantry rather than your observation. You really don't believe that women ought to vote, do you?"

"Madam, that is my conviction—when I am talking to them. And why not? Wouldn't their dainty opinions perfume the ballot-box?"

She leaned back in her chair, and for a moment it seemed that the words, the manner and the voice of this old-timer were about to make her serious. But she laughed and said that it was like a play, thus to be talking to him, "and I have been afraid that soon I should hear the ting of the bell, calling down the curtain," she said. "My life, here in this great whirlpool of seething counter currents? Haven't you found it many a time in newspapers and in books? Aren't they full of tragedies?"

"Yes, but not to the exclusion of comedies,

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and, beg your pardon, but I thought you were playing a comedy part—ahem—plucking out hearts and laughing musically at them—a musical comedy.”

“Oh, and how in keeping would it be if I should smile sadly and sigh and tell you of a soul starving for companionship.” The Colonel grunted a sort of “hump,” looking steadily at her, and after a time he said: “I understand that you own a magnificent house.” She nodded assent. “Then why don’t you live in it?” She cried out that the idea was preposterous. “This is not quite the season,” she said, “and the people are out of town.”

“Is that so? Why, it seemed to me that the town was full of folks.”

“Oh, yes, folks, but not *the* people. And, besides, it wouldn’t be living in New York if I had to stay in my own house all the time. Even in season it would on occasion be but little better than a banishment compared with life in the Waldorf. Here we have Paris, London——”

“And a mere suggestion of America,” the Colonel broke in.

‘Yes, and what does one wish more of

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America than a mere suggestion, once in a while? So representative of Chicago, with its muddy feet, America is, you know."

"Madam, you ought to meet some of the women voters of the West."

"No, thank you. They might ask too many questions."

"Ah," said the Colonel, "they might ask questions that you would not be able to answer."

"Oh," she shrugged, "and a child can do that." And then for a time they were silent. To him it seemed that she had suddenly lost some of her moral bloom, but he was not so simple as to tell her so; he had felt that in the endeared old fashion he would like to talk to her the sentimental extravaganzas of the romantic South, and to catch glimpses of what he must have regarded as a new soul, as startling as any that ancient philosophy sought to uncover; but she was too elusive. She had seen his nature, for of that he could make no disguise, could find no garment through which it would not throw its impulsive rays, but in baffling reserve she had kept her own real impulses and opinions, giving him but a moment's view, a shadow-dance,

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stimulating him, disappointing him; and against himself he was beginning to work up a resentment and an anger when she said: "I suppose that out in America they have learned by this time to ask the question, 'Is life worth living?'"

"Out there, madam, we are trying to make life not only worth living but worth working for. Upon us there has not as yet come the dotage of too much inherited money. Life still offers the prize to achievement, as it did in the days of Pericles, and——"

"And," she interrupted, shutting him off in his grandiloquence, "you follow the old injunction that the humorists tell us was hung up in the music hall: 'Please don't shoot the pianner player; he's doin' the best he kin.'"

"Ah," he said, "that joke has been forgotten out there, but for retaining old jokes on the West, New York has a marvelous memory. A thousand truths might be written of our advancement, and your people could not remember one of them." It seemed to him that she "smiled" him away from her, and when he was gone he said to himself, "I tried to play wise with her, but I'll bet she thinks I'm a fool."

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CHAPTER VI.

AT THE GRAND OPERA.

The Colonel had made preparations to return home, had bought his sleeper ticket, had lost it, and this was as far as he had advanced toward his ultimate departure. In places where he was not likely to have dropped the bit of cardboard he made diligent search, and in searching he lost several bundles that he had bought to serve as a surprise and a delight at home. The worst city to lose things in he ever saw in all his life, he said; to San Francisco he had been a number of times, but had never lost anything. Some one humorously remarked that his recent losses were but a natural expense devolving upon a visit to New York, and to this he readily agreed. "I think that I'd better put on a yellow linen duster," said he, "have myself marked on the back, and go home by freight like a ham." He was passing through the Turkish room as he made this observation, and a member of the company assembled therein, the widow, told him to put

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by his useless worry and to grant them the favor of his presence. He halted, forgot his ticket and his bundles, smiled at the widow, said that she did him proud, and sat down. The Doctor, who was also one of the company, remarked, "We missed you last night, Colonel," and the old gentleman replied, "And I might say, sir, that I missed myself. I went to a grand opera."

"And did you enjoy it?" the widow inquired.

The Colonel cleared his throat. "All during my life I have been a lover of music. Many years ago, in New Orleans, I met old Sandy Faulkner, author of the dialogue and the tune of the Arkansaw Traveler. Such was my devotion to music that I let my boat leave me, after I had purchased my ticket, and called at the hotel to see him. At that time he was thought to be one of America's greatest composers. Several other gentlemen were present, and we asked him to play his favorite tune. That is the way to honor a composer, I believe; and he played for us a most ringing jig, and it was music. I could see the moon on the hill, while down in the valley the dogs wallowed a coon—a raccoon,

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madam. With his fiddle he brought out the verdure of the forest, the buds and then the leaves; and, chilling his air, he nipped them all with a frost, and the woods were bare. He made the creek babble or he froze it up; in short, he was the master of conditions and of seasons while his fiddle was beneath his chin.

"But last night it was different. Sir, I had gone expecting to be transported. I expected that the stars from abroad would lift me up to their planetary zone, but I may say that they didn't. I was not only disappointed, but amazedly so. Now, art is art because it must remind us pleasantly of something that does, or at least could, exist in nature. But could any one conceive that two men, wrought up in anger to the point of cutting each other's throats—could you see how they could halt to wring and twist and bellow their quarrel before they act? Would any semblance of natural passion, seeking to impart to an adversary that he was a liar, strut away from him, gasp, wheel around, kick his dangling sword out of his way, sneeze, blow his angered nose, and catching the eye of a fellow whose business it was to make motions

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with a short stick, call his enemy a li-li-li-ho-ho-er-liar? That's absurd, and I may say that there's no music in it."

"But, Colonel, the Anglo-Saxon is not noted as a lover of the highest form of music," said the widow.

"Well—er," he hemmed, "not of the highest form of howling or of the deepest degree of bellowing. I would much rather be sung to sleep than shouted into antagonism, for in one music has exercised a true province, while in the other it has departed wholly from the road and gone wild-haired through the woods. Occasionally, last night, there was an oasis of melody, a patch of ripening wheat, yellow and rich in the midst of a great drought, but for the most part I was harrowed, and it seemed that there was almost constantly a dust in the air."

"Why, Colonel," cried the widow, "I am astonished at you. The symphony is a poem."

"Ah, and, madam, written in a language that no one can properly translate. Now, I wonder what I could have done with that sleeper ticket. There is too much pretense in it. You've got to work yourself up to a

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supposed understanding of it. If it were a poem or a real art it would mean practically the same to all of its votaries. But it doesn't. They tell you of the theme. A villain has murdered a girl, princess or peasant, one or the other—for in art there must be no middle class—and is telling himself about it. And when this has been given out by the man who is accepted as the one who knows, all accept his explanation. They hear the shrieks of the girl, the bark of the watchdog on the hill, and they listen with sweet shudders to the regret of the murderer. But before I was told what it meant I thought that I heard a saw striking an occasional knot. The fact is, that sort of music isn't American.

"I well recall an old fellow who came down to the Arkansas Legislature. He lived fifty miles from a railroad and was elected because the people thought he was honest. As is usual with all backwoods communities, the people of his section fancied that the capital city had no other aim in life than to grind down or wholly ignore the rural neighborhood. So they said to him, 'Uncle Bill, you are old enough to know the world. Go down there and keep them scoundrels in line.' He

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was old enough to know the world, but he had read no book and had never been out of the county. But that made no difference, for to the simple-minded mere age means wisdom. He said, 'Boys, let me get at 'em,' and he took his shoes in his hand, walked to the railroad, sat down on a log, put them on, and waited till the train came along. There was a great commotion when he arrived at the capital, but soon he discovered that he was not the cause of it. No attention was paid to him other than to any other obscure member, and day after day he sat at his desk, saying nothing. One day, some one who had heard of him, of his little cabin on the hillside and his primitive life, asked him how he was getting along, and in a confused way, passing his hand over his face, he said, 'Why, my son, I'm just a drawin' of my per diem and a fallin' back, that's all.' And that was all; so, day after day, he continued thus to sit there, never so much as getting in a motion to adjourn, while out in his settlement the voters sat about the store and discussed him, their endeared disappointment.

"But one day while the old man sat at his desk, dreaming, there came in a railroad bill

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that did directly interest his county, and without enough of parliamentary procedure to say 'Mr. Speaker,' he cried out, 'Hold on there a minute.' And then he arose slowly and he stood bent, for the most of his life had been given to the back-breaking work of setting out tobacco plants. But gradually he began to straighten and to talk, hesitatingly at first as if he were fumbling for his words, and he reminded me of a farmer sorting out his seed potatoes, selecting and rejecting; but after a time he forgot to fumble, and words in a graceful and impressive torrent came pouring upon his mind, words that doubtless he had never heard before, but they came by inspiration and were in the right place. His eyes blazed and from his fingers he seemed to pop off serpents of fire, and everybody looked on amazed, the Speaker and the rest, leaning toward him. It was as if the spirit of one of the ancient orators had returned to the earth to sport with common mortals, but the spirit was impatient to be off again, for the fire died out of his eyes, leaving cold ashes in them, and he humped over and sat down again. But the bill was dead. There, ladies

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and gentlemen, was something above all art. It was inspiration."

"Yes," said the widow, "but we can't all of us be inspired, and, besides, we aren't in a position to kill bills. And those of us who can't be inspired must resort to the arts that the commonplace may learn." And when thus she spoke there was in her voice a pathetic note, the Colonel thought, and feeling that he had overpowered her he bowed and replied, "Ah, my dear madam, but some women are always inspirations, poems, odes and sonnets, and surely you have need to be thankful to Nature, no matter what cultivation may have done for you," and she gave to him a smile that was a full reward, and in his mind he was searching for a compliment when some one, passing through the room, caused him to scramble out of his chair; and grasping a man by the hand, he cried with the mellowness of a bass-noted foxhound, "Why, my dear Judge, how are you? Ladies and gentlemen, this is my friend, the Judge, from Idaho. Sit right down. You don't know how delighted I am to see you, and, ah, you come like a season of old, full of recollection. Remember when we had that hunt-

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ing club down in Mississippi? We had a long dog, and we used him for a pillow at night when we slept with our feet to the fire. Recollect?"

The Judge recollected, and they shook each other's hands and mused over those happy times. "And I remember," said the Colonel, "that one night, while we were sleeping peacefully, Bob Logan—you know he had complained that the dog would have to be lengthened or the club reduced—wanted to trade him off for a dachshund—Bob, he was snoring, you may well believe, when the dog, who must have been dreaming, began to scratch, and Bob cried out, 'Whoa, there! Hold on, boys, my horse has flung me in a brier patch.' Ah, there couldn't have been happier days. And do you remember when we elected you police justice in Memphis? The votes were counted by a stuttering man and we got you in, and, as I remember it, your first case was that of an old negro preacher known as Slue-Footed Dan. It appears that his congregation had raised money and had given it to him to expend in the purchase of hymn-books; and as soon as he got off the train in Memphis a yellow

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darky made a break for him, recognizing him as the proper meat, took him behind a cotton shed, shot a few craps with him, and got his money. Dan went home penitent, confessed to his people, was forgiven, fitted out again and sent back to get the books; and as soon as he got off the train the same yellow fellow came after him. Dan carried a long green umbrella shut up and tied with a shoestring, and when the crapshooter came within reach Dan hauled off and with the umbrella knocked him down—nearly killed him; and, as the police were taking the preacher up to the station, I asked him how he had managed to strike such a blow with an umbrella. A grin spread over his face as he replied, 'Dar's a stove leg shet up in dat umbrella, honey.' And how is your good wife, Judge?"

"The one you knew, Colonel, has passed away."

"Oh, indeed. Well, how is she, anyway; it doesn't make any difference which one? In politics, as some of your others were?"

"Well, not at present. Some of the ladies thought of sending her to the Legislature, but changed their minds, not only characteristic

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of female but of male politics as well. Have you been here long enough, Colonel, to form an estimate of these claims?"

"Judge, I have been here long enough to——"

"To find fault with everything," said the Doctor. "We didn't know that we were so frail until the Colonel came and told us. But we are inclined to believe that New York has profited by his visit."

"Richer by many a necessary tip, sir. Judge, if you haven't already done so, find that English flunkey, give all you've got, and ask him to let you remain in his town for a brief season. You have doubtless inferred in your ignorance that the Mayor is in some little authority here, but it is a mistake. He is a mere sufferance. All of the perquisites belong to the waiter. If you cannot elicit an approving nod from him go home. He thinks that this is a British colony, sir, and he's not half-way wrong. * * * By George, here's that ticket," he cried out, "and I still have time to catch the train. Good-by."

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CHAPTER VII.

SAMMY.

The Colonel had tipped the fellow who brought down his baggage and was standing at the door waiting for a cab when up rushed a young man and seized him with both hands. With a suppressed roar the American tore himself loose, but a moment later he dropped his bundles and with Western heartiness shook the new-comer. He called upon the Lord to witness the fact that never before was he ever so glad to see anyone; he garbled out his handkerchief and made playful pretense of tying the young fellow's hands with it; said that he was going to handcuff him and take him away; he demanded explanations as to the unexpected meeting and would not wait for them to be given; within two minutes he called the young fellow Sammy a dozen times, as if it were an investment to be increased with repetition, and then he threw himself back and roared with laughter. In no land is a history briefer than in the West and Sammy had a Western his-

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tory. His father at one time was marshal of a town in Montana. One night, while striving to discharge his duty, that is, while trying to kill a desperate chap named Brux, he was fatally shot. The marshal was breathing his last when the Colonel arrived.

"I'm going," he said.

The Colonel took his hand. "It's bad to go now, Ned, for you haven't been here over long. Do you want to send the little fellow to any one?"

"No; you take him."

The Colonel took the child and in affection became his father. In the West time is as short as history. Amid the black smoke of the mines there are no seasons, no springs with promises, no summers with fruition, no autumns when men halt to muse over the passing years, but all is a day and a night, and it was but a day and a night, it seemed, before there arose the question of the boy's education. So, he was sent to a school in the Middle West. Once while he was at home during vacation the Colonel gathered from him that it was his intention to write blood-smeared stories, and as this seemed to be but natural, the adopted father did not discour-

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age it. "But I'd a little rather," said he, "that you would hire out as a section hand on a railroad." The youngster made no reply, but in his silence the Colonel saw determination, and had settled it in his own mind that the boy was to be an imitator of Ned Buntline, and therefore was not prepared for the news some time later, that the forecast had been shifted and that the young fellow had made up to the notion of becoming an electrical engineer. This was adhered to; he was graduated from Armour Institute, had gone with a party to work in Mexico, in which country the Colonel thought he was living until suddenly they met at the outer portals of the Waldorf.

"And now I want to know what the deuce you are doing here?"

The young fellow blushed. "I can't tell you right out, dad; it's something that has to be led up to. If we could sit down for a few moments I——"

"Most unfortunate, Sammy. I've got my sleeper ticket and—now what in the name of common sense did I do with that—that infernal ticket? It's harder to hold than any—any damned eel. Well, if that don't beat any—

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thing I ever saw." He began to search himself. "Hump!"

"Sleeper ticket?"

"Yes—lower birth, right over the wheels, too, I bet you. I put it into this pocket and fearing that it would not stay there, I changed it over to this one."

"Isn't that it?"

The Colonel had fished out a bit of paper. "No, sir, it's a seat check to an opera, and as tiresome a show as I ever saw. Let me see." He looked at his watch. "I haven't time to get that train now. Hump! Fate must have something to do with this thing, for it has been impossible for me to hold that ticket. Well, I don't know anything wiser than to let fate have her way. Let's go in here."

They went into the café and were seated when the Colonel suddenly bethought him that he had left his bags and his bundles somewhere in the neighborhood of the outer door. With a roar, as if he saw thieves carrying them off, he rushed forth, leaving a scallop of smiles behind him, upturned parentheses on the faces of the guests, the young fellow mused as he looked about him. A man in all the aspects of an accepted gen-

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tleman came up, bowing, and said: "I beg your pardon, sir, but is that Senator——"

"No, sir," Sammy broke in. "He is not a senator, but could have been."

"I beg your pardon."

"What for? For coming over? Glad to see you. Sit down."

"No, I thank you." But he continued to stand there. "I was about to say that I must have seen you—in Mexico."

"You have said it."

"Yes, but as I see your friend coming—I beg your pardon."

Some of the Westerners seem to think that in New York, in order to avoid the appearance of conspicuous rawness, begging pardon is an essential. The New Yorkers bring it from London. The Londoners get it from waiters and its origin can be traced to hardness of hearing and so simply means "I don't understand what you said."

The intruder withdrew before the Colonel came up. Sammy sat gazing across the room. "Got my same bunk again up stairs," said the American, sitting down. "They wanted to charge me fifty cents more a day for it, as another guest had arrived, and I was squar-

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ing myself for a speech when the fifty cents fell off like a drop of water. They say that oratory is dead, and I reckon that's the reason these New Yorkers are afraid of it. We'll give Chesterfield our order and then you may have at me with your explanation."

The order was given and the Colonel sat looking at Sammy, to note, it seemed, the changes that must have taken place within the past two years, but with the exception of a certain seriousness that always adds something to the countenance of youth, he found no alteration. He might well have been termed a young man of to-day, which may mean nothing at all, but which might mean a great deal. On the top of his head his sandyish hair had begun to show what self-congratulation may make a strain of calling a thoughtful thinness. His brow was broad and full, his eyes were of that cast which the gulch man, who studies such things, might term a dangerous gray, and his mouth was cut straight across. At present he was of an age to be taken in the West for a gentlemanly gambler, with no lack of nerve; and a few years older, he would have been "sized" as a successful politician. A reaper in the har-

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vest field of experience, he bound up his sheaves gracefully. His wild oats had been cut, and garnered in a jail at Deadwood, but as it was just a plain knock-down and drag-out, the judge complimented him upon the quickness of his muscle and sent a congratulatory letter to the Colonel. His early desire to write romances could not be taken as a plea for superior intelligence, but his determination to become an electrical engineer argued that at least he was practical, which, perhaps, is one of the greatest blessings that can fall to modern man. Since we are not permitted to go forth and pull out a usurer's teeth when we need money, a reformation in the wrong direction, I am sometimes constrained to believe, we must labor, and, forced down to employment, it is well to choose the interesting and the profitable. Compelled to do the work that is wearisome, we are but the felons of circumstance, the convicts of necessity. Sammy had a fondness for his employment and what could be a greater favor of the gods.

"Well?" said the Colonel.

Sammy withdrew his gaze from across the room, looked at the Colonel and remarked:

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"Dad, I'm here because I haven't got any sense."

"Oh. But as old Sam Johnson said, 'Of what is the use of a disguise when nothing is concealed?' Tell me something else—something that I might not already have suspected."

"I'm here because I'm a fool."

"So am I. But go ahead."

"I'm afraid you'll laugh at me."

"If I do it will show that I'm not put out with you. Go ahead."

"Don't rush me, dad. In the life of man you know there comes a time when——"

"When he rises to the gauze fly and is hooked."

"By—the deuce, do I show it that plainly?"

"What's her name?"

"I don't know—I haven't found out. There never was a bigger fool trick, but it was this way. But our affairs hadn't panned out and I was ready to come back any way. You see I'm trying to let myself down."

The Colonel sat with his elbow on the table, looking at him. The young fellow twisted his napkin. The Colonel reached over, took it from him, laughed and remarked that they

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were not now in the eating house at Grand Junction.

"I beg your pardon."

"Caught it already, begging pardon, but go ahead with what you wouldn't rather say."

"Well, we went into the City of Mexico to take the train. At the hotel that night—I mean the night I was there, you understand?"

"Of course. The night you weren't there doesn't count."

"There was a ball. Remember the Mexican Band? It played La—La something, I have forgotten the name. I've forgotten almost everything except—her. I didn't see her until she spoke, and then I shouldn't have looked 'round but my blood began to tingle, and I wanted to know why. She didn't strike me as being beautiful, but it seemed that whenever she spoke they were lighting waxen tapers, in all colors; and when I looked down and found a blossom lying on the floor, I thought that she had dropped one of her words."

The Colonel wiped his eyes. "I thank you

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for showing me that you have a soul," he said.

"No, I haven't any soul. It is all her own. When she looks at anything it has a soul. She is a creator of souls. I wish I could make you see her, but I can't. You wouldn't be swept away by her, however, until she spoke. You remember that the book tells us of Moses smiting the rock. The thirsty people stood about when he smote and out gushed the water, and the music must have been sweet, but it couldn't have been as sweet as the sound of her voice. I thought of Moses smiting the rock. Radium eyes—I can see them now. She danced, and she was graceful—wish I could make you see her. Full mouth as if her words, crowded within, fluttered to be free and to fly away. Young, yes; but somehow her face showed care, serious until she smiled and then—it was sunrise. She seemed frail and I know that I felt the blood dripping down from my heart when I fancied that she might have had trouble with her lungs. Yet she was strong and she whirled in the air when she danced, and I caught sight of her feet, and they, too, fluttered like white birds. Dad, am I foolish?"

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"Yes. But when was it that God rested from His labors? When He had created the first fool. And if the creation of a fool brought rest to the world, the contemplation of one ought not at this late day to tire man so very much. Go ahead, Sammy."

"Wish I could make you see her—but no one can see her—we can simply hear her, and then when we look we are dazzled. I used to hear you tell about the women at White Sulphur Springs and I'd smile at what I thought was your extravagance. But now there's no such thing as extravagance. When a man has been in the middle of the Pacific can you tell him about an extravagance of water? She and her party left the hotel early that night, to take a train. I heard her say New York, and instantly it became Old Bunyan's golden city, and when she went out of the ball room, the music cried for her to come back. I couldn't stay there. I rushed out and ran to my boss' room to get some money. He wasn't there. I set out to look for him; found him, but reached the station too late. But I caught the next train."

"What is her name, Sammy?"

"She hasn't any—that is, I don't know. I

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went to the register and tried to find out, but I didn't. There were a dozen or more of young women from New York. But I'm going to find out. Just now a man came up and spoke to me—said he must have seen me in Mexico, and perhaps he was in her party. He's sitting over yonder and——” He broke off and seized the Colonel by the arm. “There she is.”

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE GIRL WHO TALKED BLOSSOMS.

Not far off sat a woman, the man who had spoken to Sammy, and a girl whom the Colonel recognized as the one over whom the young fellow must have been raving, not that there was anything remarkable about her, but that she was young and yet seemed old just before she spoke to the woman beside her and then lighted into dazzling youth. He observed, too, the fulness of her mouth and he caught the flash of her wondrous eye, and then as slowly the other woman turned toward him he recognized the widow. "Why, bless my life, she is with a friend of mine," said he, "I'll go over and——"

"Please don't—not now," Sammy murmured. He looked like a condemned man whom the sheriff has just asked if he knows of any reason as to why the law should not take its course, and he shoved the dishes away as fast as the waiter placed them in front of him. "I'll be back after a while," he said,

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and he seemed to drag himself out of his chair, so enormous was the weight that had suddenly fallen upon him. The Colonel bade him wait a moment, but he hastened out, halting a moment at the door to shoot a backward glance. "Crazy," mused the Colonel. "I thought the youngsters had about got over that sort of thing—thought that it belonged wholly to the past." He glanced at the widow. She smiled at him, and with more of embarrassment than he would have liked to acknowledge, he went over to her table and was presented to Miss Johnson and shook hands with her brother, Mr. Johnson, niece and nephew of the widow. They called the widow Aunt Mag, American enough, surely. Mr. Johnson, whom the widow addressed as Dick, complained of the slowness of the waiter, slower than even in Mexico, he said, and called upon Imogene to testify to that fact, and Miss Johnson, who answered to that name, said that it was a fact, she supposed, and the Colonel looked down upon the floor, remembering that the young fellow Sammy had found a blossom where had fallen one of her words in the Mexican ballroom.

"So you didn't go after all," said the

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widow. "Permit me to say that I'm glad of it."

The Colonel bowed and the girl, whispering to her brother, said that it was charming, this grace of the old South; and the brother grunted and said something about starving to death. The American said that a combination of circumstances operated against his going. With a motion almost delicate enough to be unrecognizable, the widow bade him sit down, and he did, beside her; and she asked him to tell a story, which he did not, declaring that his mind had been swept clear of all yarns.

"I hope the wind will soon shift and blow some of them back," she said, and then Imogene spoke up. "We have heard of your stories, Colonel," and her voice was sweet, but not so musical as the widow's notes, trained into so perfect a charm. A waiter approached and informed the Colonel that his dinner was getting cold, and the American turned to him and said: "Sir, I always like my dinner cold. It runs in the family, having been acquired by my people while chasing you British in the neighborhood of New Orleans," but instantly recognizing his

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own rudeness and repenting of it, he gave the waiter a dollar, which, to all appearances, was thoroughly in accord with all demand. Imogene said that he was delicious, a sweetly tantalizing way a girl has of speaking to an oldish chap. He bowed to her and said that if they were at White Sulphur he would kiss her hand, and with a laugh in which there was the ringing of bells and the tinkling of silver strings she told him not to let the fact that those famous springs were so far away stand against such an honor and pleasure on her part.

"I went over to your table just now," said the young man, "and spoke to——"

"My son," the Colonel broke in, as Dick hesitated for a moment. "Adopted son, madam," he quickly added, looking at the widow. "He has just arrived from Mexico."

"Ah, I thought I remembered having seen him," said Dick, and the Colonel looked at Imogene to determine whether she remembered, too, but she said nothing and the American was just a little fretted to see that her countenance underwent no change. To the old-time Southerner nothing is so real as a romance; in no country do first loves so

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often realize their longings. In no place is there more of love at first sight, except in the world of Shakespeare. In no land are there more old men and old women unmarried out of remembrance and reverence for a romance whose wreath crumbled into the grave; and with Sammy's heart-frightened countenance fresh before him, with the echo of his passionate words still in his ears, the Colonel felt, or at least persuaded himself that he did feel, that the young fellow had been thrown hard against the crisis of his soul's affairs. The young woman seemed careless, as nearly all girls do to the concerned eye, and as for himself he could not determine why she should wrap a sensible fellow in a purple flame, the radiation of her own being; for study her as he might he could not get at the secret of her overwhelming charm. Sammy had not noticed her until she spoke and then his blood began to tingle, even before he had in fact caught sight of her, but the Colonel could not understand what there was in her words, the tone of her voice, that should so powerfully operate upon a youngster's blood. Her voice was sweet, of course; and why should it not be, since she was well bred and

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refined? It was not to be expected that a girl, unless she had a long neck and short hair, should be possessed of an unpleasant voice. Her eyes were soulful—well, yes, radium, in a manner; and her autumn hair looked as if it might have ripened in amber atmosphere, but a man caught simply by hair could not be held with even steel. Above all, he did not know that she had looked at him and how could love ripen unless eye should meet eye? She was too well rounded to have had trouble with her lungs, for looking at a bit of ribbon worn rather low, the Colonel was reminded of a rice-bird when the fields were turning brown. He felt that she was slangy. She seemed in her manner, quiet though it was, fully adventurous enough for that sort of talk, to show her own refinement that she was not afraid of herself and was not to be hemmed in by convention. Now, anyone could love the widow at first or at even the second sight of the dotard. She reminded him of a bit of lace; she was made of silken threads, tinged with a sunset. What witch, with her hank of midnight, had spun her hair? Had those ears been brought from the southern sea, pink shells; and had

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the rose bush contributed her lips? But now as he looked from one to the other as laughingly they talked, he saw that the two women were vastly different in a way more elusive than in form and feature. Imogene was, the Colonel suddenly thought, a book easily read, her print clear and large, not to be mistaken, while the widow was to be read in only to the extent that she was willing. She had a way of dimming her lines, of obscuring her sentences, of hiding her plot, which, after all, the American thought was charming, for we like the books best that are not too easy to comprehend. Ease dulls the mind, blunts appreciation, while a little perplexity sharpens our wit and puts us in a mood to compliment ourselves.

After many bows, new views of a quaint picture, the Colonel made an appointment to meet the ladies in the Turkish room after dinner, and would desire the presence of Mr. Dick Johnson, too, he said, but that young man replied that he had an engagement, he was sorry, which he was not; and the Colonel said that he was so sorry, which he was not, for the brother of Imogene had not shed any light upon the scene. So the American shook

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hands with him, bowed again and again to the ladies and withdrew, to be halted by the waiter who informed him that his dinner was now cool enough to be eaten. This bit of humor on the part of the Britisher, who was born and brought up on a farm in the West, was worthy of reward and the American tipped him again. But he did not sit down to eat of the cold meal. Somehow he felt that it was a part of the past not to be recalled, and so he went out to a lunch counter, where he called a Dutch girl "my dear," who, in return referred to him as "a handsome old guy."

Finding from the register the number of Sammy's quarters, the Colonel went up and knocked on the door. The young fellow came to let him in, and seeing that his caller was his stepfather, seized him by the hand in a caper which was no doubt expressive to himself of his own distress, but which to anyone else was far from bearing an aspect of sadness. "And you have heard her speak," he said, wheeling out a chair for the Colonel, who sat down and crossed his legs. "Ur—yes, heard her speak."

"Did—did she say anything about—me?"

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"Why, I don't think she ever saw you."

"Good Lord, is it so one-sided as that?"

"I was just thinking, Sammy, that you mustn't tell the widow anything at all about me. She's got me to guessing and now I want her to guess awhile herself. Gad, there's something strange about her—sweetly strange, I might say. And how I have lied to her, but not viciously, Sammy. Yes, I've heard her speak—went over, as I said I'd do, and had quite a chat with them. By the way, the girl is the widow's niece."

"What! you don't tell me!"

"Now—now, what caused you to suspect that I didn't tell you? Is it anything unusual for a widow to have a niece? Why, the average widow has one."

"Ah, but not such a one as that," Sammy replied, despondently shaking his head. "Dad, you—you don't know that girl."

"Doesn't appear that you do, either. There was an old fellow lived down——"

"Don't tell a story, dad; don't, please, for to hear anything except about her—is maddening—I'm almost tempted to say."

"Did say it. Bacon said, however, that no

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really great man ever lost himself completely in his infatuation for a woman. He——”

“Oh, Bacon be damned—I beg your pardon.” He came over to the Colonel and with boyish affection put his hands upon the American’s shoulders. Somewhere behind him, in a polite past, there was gentle blood—in Baltimore’s colony; and though he was born amid the scent of gunpowder, one night when the cowboys were shooting out the red lights of the town, he was called the “gentleman toddler” when in kilts he wandered about the mining camp. The only mark made upon him showed itself in his desire to write blustry romances, but this, as has been said, soon passed away.

“Sit down, Sammy, and let us talk this thing over,” said the Colonel, and when the youth had obeyed, leaning back helplessly in a rocking chair, the American continued: “Don’t understand me to say that it is better to be Bacon’s great man than the ordinary result of nature’s intention. It is better to be the fool in love than the wise man in the hall of science. The promises of love are often fulfilled; of wisdom, never. Love leaps into glory with a kiss. Wisdom has no kiss of

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perfect fruition." Slowly he began to hammer upon his knee. "The truth is, Sammy, I'm at this unholy moment in love with that widow—can't help it to save my life; have fought against it, but my fight simply strengthens the enemy. She thinks I'm married. In a sort of guy, I told her along with the rest that I was on my wedding journey, many years after marriage, as the trip could not have been undertaken earlier, and that my wife preferred to go one place and I another. Don't tell her the truth, that I was never married."

"Now, dad, that's where you make a mistake. She might fall in love with you. How could she help it when she comes to know you well? You aren't old; you are big and as strong as a lion. You are just in your prime."

"Your last statement is correct, Sammy. I am just in my intellectual prime, at least. But beautiful women are not looking for intellectual primes. They are glancing about for position. They say, 'give me what I want and I will make you believe that you and I are happy. Give me——' "

The boy made some sort of a sign of distress, cutting off the Colonel's world-wisdom

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talk; and with an atoning bow the American continued: "Guess I went a little too far, Sammy. The fact is that when a man sets out to be wise he doesn't know when to stop. It is the strain to say a wise thing that makes nearly every talkative man foolish. But you know that out in America they have spoiled me by calling me a philosopher. Did I tell you that we have an engagement to meet them in the Turkish room this evening?"

"Great Cæsar, no!"

"Sit down. Not time to go yet. I don't suppose you've got a dress suit with you?"

"Of course not. I brought nothing but a handbag full of—distress. I'm crazy, I tell you."

"Yes, I reckon that is a fact. But gods, what is it not worth to be in your fix, youth crazy in love! In that one fact is concentrated all creativeness, all genius. If the old South hadn't passed away, Sammy, I should have been an orator. This country, you know, produced an original oratory, and a mild echo of it we called literature. But I'm drifting. We'd better go out now, and rent some swallowtails. I haven't worn one in some time, but I want to tell you that in the

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South they were as common as brown jeans. Why, it got so that the predatory birds wouldn't stay out of a field unless a scarecrow was arrayed in evening dress—crows didn't think they were real otherwise. Come, pull yourself together."

Sammy had reached that stage when he was willing to be led by any mind wiser than his own, when, indeed, all minds seemed wiser; and ready to go he stood like a rage tamed into listlessness. "Don't let the supposition that you may not get a suit to fit worry you," said the Colonel, looking about for his hat. "Truth is, you know, the average dress suit fits better when it has been made for someone else. There was an old fellow named Habbleson—but you don't want any stories. You said just now, or I inferred from what you said or didn't say, that I ought to tell the widow that I'm not married. But that would destroy her freedom with me. You know it is easier for a woman to make a companion of a young fellow than an old one. The old fellow's vanity leads him toward sentimental extravagances; so if I should tell her, she would constantly stand in dread of what might come next; she

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would be afraid of love-making, if she's sensible, and not worth loving if she isn't. She's rich——"

"Well, aren't you?"

"If I am she must not know it. I wonder if I can get at what I want to say. No woman enjoys an easy conquest. Where there are no barriers the conquest may be easy. Marriage was instituted for the protection of woman, but if she can, by her beauty or her wit, break down all regard for these barriers and win a fellow's love, whether or not, she is put to a delicious test, and that is what she likes. Of course her contempt arises when the conquest has been made. Guess I've missed what I wanted to say. It was as a dream not tangible enough to be told."

The young fellow looked at him. "Colonel, isn't it because you would like to break through a barrier yourself and win her love—over the fence of your own supposed marriage?"

"Well put, Sammy. But I'm not vain enough to believe that I could ever impress her. As I said I love her—oh, in a dazzled sort of way—and the Lord knows, I've loved

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many a one—would have married once if it hadn't been for maple syrup. I was living in Paris, Kentucky, and had formed the acquaintance of a most charming girl who resided in an adjoining county. I had cut many a scollop about her in the ballroom; had come near kissing her on the deserted public square one night, but just at that moment some fellow threw a jug out of a window, and its falling with a loud crash into the street frightened her. But about the maple molasses. I was to meet her one morning to go with her to the county fair over at Georgetown. The train was on time and I was hastening through breakfast at the hotel, to join her at the station, as she was on the train, when just as I shoved back my chair the negro waiter came up and said that I must try the new molasses, just brought in. He knew that I liked the juice of the sugar tree. I demurred, telling him that I hadn't time, but he declared that it wouldn't take but a minute, so I stayed. And, sir, while I was eating, the train came along and left me. The girl had saved me a seat beside herself, but when I failed to make my appearance, she gave it to another fellow, who pro-

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posed to her that very day and was accepted. We'll go out, now. I don't suppose it is of any use to tell you to be self-possessed, but I must caution you to be as cool as you can. If she sees that you are her slave she'll have no interest in you."

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CHAPTER I X.

SELF-POSSESSED, BUT WHIRLED AWAY.

In the Turkish room the two women were waiting. The Colonel was surprised at the youngster's self-possession. When presented to the girl he bowed with a grace that was not unbecoming to his swallow-tailed rig, and so proud was the American that with a speech upon the worth and bravery of his step-son he came near spoiling it all. "Dad—I mean the Colonel, has told me a great deal about you, Madam," Sammy said to the Widow, "and I was pleased with the prospect of meeting not only you but so near a relative of yours," and he bowed and smiled and the girl laughed, which threatened his overthrow, but he steadied himself.

"My Brother said something of your being in Mexico," she said.

"Yes, I was there, and I thought that I saw—him. But one meets so many in traveling, you know."

She knew, or at least she said she did, and both of them looked as if they had found a

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truth, as important as any new discovery in chemistry or astronomy. He asked her if she liked Mexico, and she answered by saying that while she was there she persuaded herself that she did; and as nothing could have been wiser than this, he looked ten years older in his determination to stand face to face with it. Usually the young fellow was full of fun, and now the Colonel waited for his rippling humor, but it did not come, for owl-like he sat looking at the girl, with never an effort to say other than the conventional thing. "Ah," mused the American, "he thought he was infatuated with her, away off in Mexico at a time when he had not attempted to get at her mind, but now that he meets her he finds nothing in her and repents of his foolishness."

Ah, but how delightful was the Widow. He could not have given a good notion of her appearance as she sat back in a great upholstered chair; one moment she seemed pink and then blue and afterward red, to go back again to pink, a fountain with different lights falling on her; and he wondered if in the history of womankind so beautiful a creature had ever lived before to grace the world with

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her smile. He wondered why she should like him or be interested in him any further than she might find in him a sort of rare specimen, and he resolved to continue to be rare, if he could, thus to enjoy the fact that she was near him. Standing too near a dynamo stops a watch, and he told her that she had influenced his watch to go wrong, and when she laughed he looked up suddenly as if some one had turned on a new and different-colored light. Whenever he fancied that her interest was shifting its scene from him he would tell her a story, and it was then that to her he seemed the quaintest, when his individuality was strongest. But she did not dare too much to encourage his story-telling lest he might hit upon one too long for the occasion. Quick and nervous herself, she was afraid of slow detail. She liked to put him to the distress of meeting a sudden opinion of her own, some view that might be real or assumed; and she strove to set traps for him. But sometimes in her search for opinions and finding them, she was herself at a loss to determine which were real or how much of any one were simply assumed to stimulate argument. Sometimes

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a sudden thought, new to us, becomes a conviction, and the Widow found that in talking to the American she was possessed of a bird-flight of opinions hitherto strange to her. "We are happiest—we women—when we are compelled to do the things that we have always wanted to do," she said, and for a moment the American looked as if he were about to sneeze, but in the Colonel's countenance the sneezy expression settled into mild surprise, and the Widow continued: "Yes, we sometimes want an excuse for doing the things which we have longed to do. Perhaps we have gone about from day to day, with a bright thought, but with no excuse to give it utterance; and we are thankful for occasion to give it speech. But what was I going so say?"

"Perhaps, Madam, you were waiting for me to give occasion to your bright thoughts."

"Oh, you always do that—if I have any. Yes, I was going to ask you if you weren't secretly glad that you are to remain with us a little longer."

"Secretly, Madam? Oh, no. Proudly and therefore outwardly as well as inwardly glad."

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Over in a corner the young fellow and the girl had found something which they evidently imagined to be a curio of great interest, and the Widow nodded toward them. "Glad to see your step-son enjoying himself?"

"Yes—now that you have mentioned it."

"Your own children——"

"I have no children of my own."

"Why, I thought you said that they were grown up and gone out for themselves."

"Did I say that? A mere figure of speech, Madam. I believe I said that the time had finally come when I could afford a bridal tour, but I don't remember of having spoken of the—ahem—children. I said that my wife went on a trip to Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, I believe. I don't suppose you were ever there, but it is a most interesting place. It was there that my friend, Will Visscher, the poet, was a police judge."

"A poet and a police judge?"

"Yes, Madam; and every lawyer who practiced before him had to take out poetic license. He wrote all his decisions in rhyme, even if he had to reverse a decree of the supreme court to get the necessary word; and

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his reports might serve as a text-book for a court of romance. Once he issued an injunction that made him famous. Into the courtroom there came a youth, tangled of hair and crazy of eye, and said: 'Judge, I need your help.' 'All right, what can I do for you?' 'Well, sir, I am in love with a girl and if I don't get her the sun will go out and all the world forever be dark.' 'That would be bad,' replied the Judge. 'We need sunshine to ripen the corn, for liquor made out of green corn wouldn't be to the taste of the best society of this commonwealth. So what can I do, now, to keep the sun shining?' The young fellow dropped into a chair and after a few moments looked up as if he had at last found courage enough to float his idea. 'The reason I am about to lose her is because a fellow is going to see her and he's going swift and often. He gives her figures of speech that I don't find at my command; says things that makes the red of delight come to her cheeks—feeds her on the sweets of a flattering mind; and now I want an injunction against him—want an order restraining him from talking about anything but weather and the crops.' The Judge medi-

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tated. 'It is the province of the law, or at least ought to be, to protect the weak. I'll issue the injunction.' He did so, served it with a big fellow that knew how to hit hard or handle a gun, and the girl married the common but more devoted lover."

The Widow smiled, but having hit upon a subject that involved the necessity of dodging, she was determined to pursue it. "Colonel, I suppose your wife was a blue grass girl."

"I might rather say, Madam, a clover blossom."

"Tall?"

"Judging by height, Madam, I should say that you and she were sisters."

"I wish you had brought her; I know that she and I should have become famous friends, for already I am more interested in her than in almost any of my real acquaintances. Perhaps, however, it is a curiosity to see what sort of woman could have captivated you."

It seemed to the Colonel that at this moment she stabbed him in the eye with a splinter of light out of her own; and he blinked, wondering why she should so delve at this

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subject when she ought to see that he was striving to avoid it. He began to tell her a story of an old inn keeper who had a black bear chained to a tree in his yard, but he fancied that he saw her mind, with all of its bright variations, colored mists, floating away from him. Could it be that she really was interested in the supposed wife or was it that she was pleased to scorpion him?

"I ought to have brought her with me," he said; "and I should, too, if I had suspected that she could have found such a friend. But of course I could not imagine that a leader in society here——"

The room rang with the music of her laughter. The youngsters looked up from their curio corner, but looked down again; and the Colonel glanced at the Widow as if in slightly opening his mouth he had split a word and didn't know how to join it together again. "Why, Colonel," she said, "I'm no leader in society. I know some people that are rather important, or who at least believe they are, but the great society whirls past me, giving to me merely the picture of its flying skirts. Oh, you are going to say that I must have money or I couldn't live here in

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this hotel. Perhaps I have, and I might also possess money enough to buy this hotel and even then not be a leader in society. Money isn't everything in New York."

"Gad, Madam, but it comes mighty nigh it."

"But it doesn't mean as much here, Colonel, as it does in the West. There it is everything. Here——"

"Here, it is everything with a tip thrown in."

She did not agree with him. She said that the very highest society in New York as in London was not vulgarized by money. The Colonel remarked that he did not know exactly what she meant by high society unless it was something like that of Knob Hill, in San Francisco; but she frowned upon his play with a word and he shifted his ground. "Of course I know well what you mean and I am grieved to take issue with you. During all of my life I have heard of society that was not based on money, but I have never been permitted a glimpse of it. Money of the second generation resents money of the first generation. The more the generation is drawn out the more is new money resented,

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upstart money; but if there had been no money there would have been no society. Of itself fame soon passes away. There is nothing more pitiable than poverty-stricken importance, and unless fame leaves money to its offspring, the family becomes a snob of poverty and is, I might say, passed up by society—in self defense. There is no doubt a circle in this town which imagines itself above money. What then is it based upon? Intellect? Let a penniless philosopher strive to break into it. Madam, this country has seen no finer society than the old society of the South. It was said that one needed only respectability and cultivation to enter it, and only genius to become distinguished. But this is not true, for I know that to go ornamented into that society required cotton and negroes. Perhaps the greatest orator this country ever produced was Sargeant S. Prentiss. From New England he went to Mississippi, a poor school teacher. The discovery of his genius required only the opening of his mouth, for in his idlest talk his words were as grains of gold. But he was not recognized by society until he had made both fame and money."

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She asked if all of the famous orators of the old South were rich men. He scratched his head. "Well, no, they weren't rich, but they were usually men of means. Oratory, Madam, is the voice of elegant leisure. Statesmanship is the practical management of affairs, and the South had orators but no statesmen. Jackson was a soldier; James K. Polk an opportunist; Henry Clay an eloquent trimmer; Calhoun the genius of disturbance; Hayne a forcible and proud debater, but they were not business men, and a statesman is but the manager of a mighty estate. But I beg your pardon, we were talking about society."

She looked at him as slowly she moved her fan. Imogene and Sammy had quietly strolled away. "At first I thought you came, wearing your heart upon your sleeve," she said, smiling. "But although not of New York, you are of the world—of society; and while you playfully boast of being an American, you are a man of ceremony. And I can see that you might be——"

"What, Madam?"

"Dangerous. I know you are a flatterer, and yet I half believe your flatteries even be-

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fore you have uttered them. I thought that I had long since ceased to put confidence in any man."

"Madam, you half believe me because it is often given to woman to see and to estimate but half of a truth. I have never thought to flatter you. You have given to me the opportunity to speak what I conceive to be true, and for this I thank you. Those who place us in a position to speak the truth have conferred a great favor. If when I say that your eyes are splendid you——"

"I beg your pardon," she broke in, with a trifle more of vigor given to the motion of her fan. He bowed and she looked at him a long time before she spoke. "I should like to say something but I am afraid that it might hurt you."

"If it be to point out a vanity of mine own, let me have it."

"Not to point out a vanity but perhaps to deplore a fact. I was wondering why I had never heard of you—why, indeed, the world had not heard of you. Having such material, I am at a loss to know why you have not made more of yourself. I have met many men who were regarded as great, sen-

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ators and the like, and they have failed to interest me as you do. At first, as I say, I took you to be simple; I thought your delightfulness proceeded from that fact; but you are far from being simple. You have what is rare in a man of noticeable politeness—thought; and I wonder why you have not put it to conspicuous uses. Was it your sense of humor? Don't you know that humor, while possessed by the great, often keeps a man from attempts which look to be vain and ridiculous? Don't you know that?"

"If I had not—not lost my hat somewhere, Madam, I should at this moment take it off to you. But it was not a sense of the humorous that kept me from striving to make more of myself."

"It wasn't a lack of education, for you are much better educated than one might at first believe."

"I have a sheepskin, Madam, which may never have been the hide of the famous Derby Ram, but which must have covered a good sized bell wether."

"Without seeking to, Colonel, you have made a mystery of yourself. But I am glad

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to know that you are married, for otherwise I could not be so free with you."

"Ah, and have you been free? You haven't told me anything about yourself. I can not believe that you married for—well, other than love, and yet about you there is just a bit of cynicism. In you I fancy a reminiscent romance. You married——"

"A man."

"An old man?"

"Older than I was."

"Ah, he might have been that and yet a mere boy."

"Delightful."

"I am waiting for more."

"Let us talk about something else. Tell me a story."

"The subject we studiously depart from is usually the most interesting, just as what we should not say is nearly always more to the point. You married for——"

"Didn't I intimate once that I married for freedom?"

"Weren't you free before?"

"No, I was a slave—to myself. Is your wife fond of society?"

"Yes, she goes to church quite often."

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"Member of any club?"

"She is not of a quarrelsome disposition."

"You are delightful, Colonel."

Sammy and the girl came back into the room. The young fellow was sedate but the girl was chatty. "I've heard enough of the West to write a book about it," she said, and the Colonel remarked that not having heard half so much and without half trying she might still produce a better and a truer account of the West than any volume brought out by the average tourist. This pleased her. She was standing near the Colonel and perhaps with an unconscious memory coming back from infant years she put forth her lips, as a child does to be kissed. Or was it conscious mischief. Sammy appeared to be afraid that he might stay too long, a sense of propriety that usually comes with a sense of sudden awkwardness, and more than once he slyly made to the Colonel a distressful sign to go, but the American had struck one of his easy streaks and continued to talk, looking about for his hat, of course; and Sammy stood with his weight shifting from one leg to the other, after the manner of a young rooster with frost-bitten feet. Every time

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the girl looked at him she gave him a new sensation, and when after a time she flamed forth an unexpected radiation, a smile from her splendid store of dazzles, he put up his hand to find that his head was gone, and he moved about as if he might find it with his feet. He could not afterward recall how he got out of the room, whether he was swung out or blown out by a scented whirlwind; but when a vestige of sense returned to him he was sitting in the Colonel's room, while up and down the American was walking with his hands behind him.

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CHAPTER X.

AT THE WINDOW.

The Colonel halted at a window and looked out over the city, the great unrest, his meditative eye wandering along the roofs of Fifth Avenue, channel of vanities; and in his mind he could see the millions of contending and unquiet souls that yearly jostle there. Away down below where turmoil falls to sleep at night, in the quaint old streets almost of a medieval day, prosperity gives ambition birth, then moves it up the Avenue. To outward look how bright a tide through that channel flows! Peacocked beyond democracy, display its coat of arms and gold its earldom, these yearning spirits move, dollars in rivalry. Virtue founds republics, diamonds kill them. The psalm moves the Anglo-Saxon to deeds of fanatic valor; the opera inspires him with art and art tends toward monarchy. Republics individualize desires; they touch wealth with unrest, with distrust of envious poverty. Laws made by popular assemblies seem too weak for vast estates,

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and toward a throne mossed over with time-grown privileges gout-blooded millionaires cast a beseeching eye. Thus speaks the self-appointed seer and we laugh at him. But has not false security always laughed at danger? We know that while islands rise out of the sea, while rivers change their courses, while lakes become fields and fields lakes—while, indeed, all physical nature is changing, human nature remains the same. American life, the school, work, money, fashion, opulence, all unsatisfactory, and then what? Daughters married to princes, sons making iron. The contrast is too great. What does it portend? Some sort of change. Inequality at the top, unrest at the bottom, with a middle sluffing both ways. Poverty is becoming more intelligent and intelligence has ever been resentful. But when shall our estate become settled? Never so long as man is an experiment unto himself.

These thoughts the Colonel had mused aloud, and he turned about expecting a reply from his young friend, but Sammy sat in a daze; he had not heard.

“Well, what do you think of what I said?”

“Did you speak, dad?”

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"Speak? Why, I have been haranguing for fifteen minutes."

"About her—Imogene?"

"Hell, no—I beg your pardon. I was talking of what a fine street this is out here. Feel sleepy?"

This aroused him. "Sleepy? No, I don't feel as if I could ever sleep again. I have been trying to recall some word that I said to her, so that I might get at her answer to it, but I can't. I kept my head by holding it on with my hands, but along toward the last it got out of my grasp—thought I felt my very hair slipping through my fingers; and I couldn't see."

"My boy, you behaved better than you think."

"I hope so, for I'm not able to think. I tell you she has poisoned me with her eyes, and lest I might recover, she showered upon me the sweet pestilence of her words."

The American moved closer to him, looked at him and said: "Are you sure you studied electricity at that institute? By George, I should think you'd given the most of your time to reading the reports of an insane asylum. But why should I speak thus, since

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when was it that love ceased to be a madness? Where does this girl live?"

"Somewhere in Maine, I believe. And thank God, she's not rich. Her aunt paid for her education—educated the brother, too, I understood. Wish to the Lord she was ignorant—wish she couldn't spell cat."

"I suppose you wish she was a scrub girl."

"I do," he exclaimed, bounding out of his chair. "I'll swear I do. I wish she were the daughter of a raftsman. I'd marry her, float out on a raft with her and stay there forever. Was it you that told me my father went insane about a woman?"

"I never told you that, Sammy. You must have woven it in the loom of your own diseased brain."

"No, I didn't. Some one told me. It was about my mother he went insane."

"When she died we did believe that he had lost his mind."

"No, it was before she died. He went to her, with a pistol in his hand, cocked it and swore that unless she would agree to marry him he would blow his head off, and the story goes that she flew to his arms to keep him from killing himself. But I want to tell

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you right now that I'm strong enough to teach this girl a lesson. I'm going to win her with the sweet melody of indifference."

"Do you remember what they said of the little fellow that had been given to Falstaff? 'Hath not the boy profited?' I can see, sir, as I never saw before, that you have been associating with me; and you have profited, I fear, just about as much as that boy did. The evil words we learn come out in our moments of insanity. We learn wisdom and it lies dormant, probably never to come out."

"Dad, how long are you going to stay here?"

"I don't know. I can't leave you here in this fix."

"And by the Love of the Lord, you can't take me away in this fix. That's certain. Would it be well to tell her that I have prospects?"

"No, don't tell her. And as I requested before, don't tell the Widow anything about me."

"Are you going to win her, if you can?"

"What the deuce do I want with her? She'd make a painted stick of me—a red and yellow monkey. She is wise, but her wisdom

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is of the worldly sort, and I don't think that she would value a man except as he could be of advantage to her in a social way, and of course I can buy——" he hesitated. "But it's an intoxication to be near her. I am now on a spree and I don't know how long it may last. What's that? She might consent to marry me? Why, Sammy, if I were as crazy about her as you are about that girl Imboden, I——"

"What's that? Gracious alive! dad, her name is Imogene."

"That so? I thought it was Imboden. But it's all the same. As I was saying, I might be as crazy about her as you are over Imogene, and yet I wouldn't marry her. Better to be miserable without her than more miserable with her."

He walked up and down the room, halted for a time at the window and looked out. Some of the myriad eyes of the night had gone blind; noises had ceased, and whence had come a roar, now came the occasional clap, clap, of horse hoofs on the asphalt road.

"There is escape for me, as there always has been, Sammy," he said, slowly resuming his walk, "but I don't see any way out of it

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for you. That is, only one way, and we must win her. But I want to tell you that she's not worth having unless she marries you for yourself. You've got a quick—a devilish good mind, with a touch of poetry in it, and this impels me to remark that unless a mind has this quality it is worthless. You know I'm a believer in the soul, and the mind is the struggling agent of the soul. I am not sufficiently educated to be a scientist, and I am not enough of a materialist to be over practical. So, the only thing that is left for me to believe in is the real existence of the soul. It was only by accident that I could ever have been worth anything financially, and I am more and more convinced that wealth is a matter of luck. What's luck? There you've got me. Industry doesn't always mean even a bare competency. It is old but it never ceases to be true that merit is not always rewarded. Gad, it's rarely rewarded. I knew an old fellow named Talbott, and——"

"I beg your pardon, dad, but really I can't stand for a story."

"Not a love story?"

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"No, for they are all tame compared with my own."

"That is what millions of men and women have thought."

"But do you believe that millions have been as crazy as I am?"

"At some time, yes. But if it is any consolation for you to believe that you are alone, all right. And I guess there *is* a sort of consolation in it. When a man is utterly miserable he is helped by the thought that he's the most miserable man in the world. Yes," he said, halting in front of the young fellow and looking at him, "we must win her. And it can be done."

"What, can be done? Do you think she is so cheap?"

"What a draftsman of difficulties. If she's mortal she may be won, and if she isn't, she'd make a devilish poor wife."

The young fellow sat down, leaned over with his face in his hands, slowly raising the hindmost legs of the chair off the floor. "Dad, I'm sorry that this came on me just at this time."

"Why not this time as well as any other? Sorry? I'm not. It tickles me. Somehow

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I'd got it into my head that such a thing died out when Grant stood face to face with Lee. I was but a child then, but now it seems that then I grieved over the death of romance in America. Yet how could it be since the soul is ever fresh? Sammy, I will confess to you that if I were wise I'd pick up and go home. I've told you many a time that I've been in love, and in a way I was, but I knew that it would pass away, into a dream, half remembered. This time, however, it is a little more difficult to dispel; and when you found me at the door, with my bags and my bundles, I was debating whether or not to go, weakening, too, toward the weak side—not to go. I didn't want to acknowledge to myself that she was holding me here."

"Win her, dad—marry her."

"Do you counsel this when you are my heir?"

"Yes, I do, dad."

He put his hand on the young fellow's head. "You've got a soul worthy of that game father of yours, Sammy, and of that beautiful mother. I don't suppose you can more than remember her. It seemed to me that she had always just come out of the

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wild woods, where the vines cling; and always on her lips there was the stain of the grape."

"Dad." The young fellow took both the Colonel's hands in his own. "Dad, did you love her?"

"She walked down out of the hills, like spring time coming; and what an odd fancy, but I always thought that I could see music hidden in her hair, sweet little tunes; and afterward I heard her singing them to you."

"Did you love her, dad?"

"Yes—God, yes. Well, let us turn in. Good-night."

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CHAPTER XI.

MR. JOSEPH AUKWALL SKIDDER.

On the following morning the young fellow said that he felt a trifle saner, for even insanity has its moods. Contrary to his expectations he had slept and had not dreamed, so weary was his mind with its own company. The Colonel called at his room, to take him down to breakfast, and in the café he sat where he could command a clear view of the entrance, but finding that there was more than one way to get into the room, he divided his attention until the Colonel relieved him by saying: "She'll not come in here, Sammy. This is a snack room for men and not the one where we were yesterday. What are you going to do to-day?"

"What can I do? I'm not in a position to rush matters. Dad, sometime when you're in the humor will you tell me more about—my mother?"

"Not now, Sammy."

"No, but when you are in the humor, I said. Will you?"

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"Yes, sometime I'll tell you all you need to know."

"Shouldn't I know all about her?"

"Perhaps not. But we'll not talk about it now. Sammy, would you like to live in this town?"

"Oh, I should think that anybody would like to live here. I can't imagine anything more fascinating than life at full tide, and this is the flood. And where there are so many people there must be ennobling ideas."

"Well, yes," said the Colonel. "Wish that damned waiter wouldn't walk like a catamount. Always ideas where there are people. Take all the people away and there wouldn't be any ideas. You got two spoons? Thank you. But it is a mistake to suppose that the greater the multitude the greater the thought. It has been said that the majority is never right, but I don't take to this notion, for it would destroy all idea of popular government."

"Dad, was the old South much in favor of popular government?"

"Of course—a government popular with those who administered it." He laughed. "The South held a peculiar sort of aristoc-

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racy, Sammy. It was always conservative. If it had a riot it was over principle and not over tea. Chatham, in his famous speech on America—the last spurt of his genius, pale and on crutches, declared that the South was still sound. It was not because our forefathers had inherited no love of liberty, but because they were conservative. Wait a moment, you are going to speak of the war.”

“Oh, no, I’ll not start you on that, dad.”

“I thank you. But the war was an uprising on the part of the South in favor of conservatism. Good deal like the fellow that fought to keep the peace, but it is a fact. The South demanded consistency under the Constitution, and that was conservatism. Now this bill of fare said corn cakes, and if they haven’t put sugar in ’em I’m the biggest liar in the world. Now let’s see. What do you want to do after breakfast?”

“Nothing.”

“Hard to arrange. See that old stock-broker over there—white hair and mustache? I’ll bet he made or lost fifty thousand yesterday.”

“Haven’t you been worth one day fifty thousand more than the day before?”

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"But I didn't make it with my nerves. But look here, boy, don't let fall anything about what I may be worth. You and I are men in ordinary circumstances, you understand? Let the girl believe that you intend to follow your calling—that you had to learn a trade, so to speak. Don't get acquainted with any of these newspaper fellows. It is dangerous even to know them."

"But you can't hide yourself all the time, dad. They'll find you out sooner or later."

The American laughed as if pleased and not a little flattered by the notion that he must surely be found out; and having shown that he was alive to the compliment of unsubmergible identity, he must protest against the apparent egotism of it all; so he assumed a sort of slouchy air, always with him an outward sign that inwardly he must consider himself of no particular value to the world, and remarked: "And my complete discovery couldn't mean a great deal, Sammy. Of course, it could be flailed into a sort of sensation—this infernal waiter leaves too much to the imagination. You know in a book or a play I like a good deal left to the imagination, but not in a restaurant. I'll just leave his tip to his own imag-

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ination and then let him settle as to its degree of vividness. Kindliness is all very well, but justice is the noblest quality in man. Sometimes we are wounded by an execution of the demands of justice; and if we are weak, we fail and the cause of mankind suffers. In this instance I shall not yield to weakness; and always after this I shall be strong enough to be just. I'll begin on this infamous waiter. Here, you, help me on with my overcoat."

In a half-hearted way the waiter assisted him. "I guess you'd call it a top coat," said the Colonel, turning about with a glower, "but I am here to tell you that it's an overcoat, a name finally and permanently established by the outcome of the War of 1812. But of course you don't pay any attention to such matters."

The waiter bowed. "It's hard for me to pay any attention to anything about me this morning, sir; and if I haven't served you as well as you thought I ought, I beg your pardon and promise to do better another time." He turned to go. The Colonel spoke, and respectfully he halted. "What's the trouble with you to-day?"

"My little boy isn't expected to live, sir."

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“Hah? What’s that? My dear fellow, it is I who must ask your pardon. Don’t bow to me—I’m nothing this morning but an ordinary grizzly bear. Er—you go home—right now, and your interest here sha’n’t suffer. And you bring all the bills to me. Here, you’ll need this.” He pressed into the waiter’s hand a piece of gold. “Bills here to me, you understand, and if you fail I’ll have you discharged. You can’t trifle with me, sir. I won’t have it. You don’t know who I am. Now you go on home.” He took hold of Sammy’s arm and strode out, muttering as he went: “But you can’t always recognize Justice. She is not only blind herself, but sometimes she has a way of dimming the sight of others. It’s a damned shame—everything is a damned shame. Let’s go out and get the air—down Broadway.”

In some city, Denver, Salt Lake or Ogden, the Colonel had found a cigar that supplied every demand of his fancy, and though he had not retained the name, if indeed he had taken notice of it at the time, he was continuously looking for that particular brand. The cigar had been grabbed hastily, between trains, and he could not remember whether

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it was intended to lend fame to a statesman or add luster to a prima donna, but he recalled the fact or at least the supposed fact that it was of medium strength and cost ten cents. These two features were little enough for the establishment of an identity, but he accepted them as clues in his search and wondered at the stupidity of cigar dealers. Upon justice the American was still harping when he turned into a tobacco shop. Sammy waited while the Colonel told his story to the Italian dealer. "Of course you don't keep the cigars that people want," said the American. "So far as the price is concerned, sir, I don't give a snap. No, that isn't it. I don't suppose they ever made but two of them—just two, and they were meant as a tantalization. Why didn't I remember the name? Why don't you remember the name? It's your business to remember such things." A curly haired boy ran out from a rear room. "That youngster—was he born in this country? I'm glad to know it. He may make a good citizen. You've never been West? Would like to go? Well, I'm glad to hear you say that, any way. I'll take a dollar's worth of these," and as he went out he said

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to Sammy, "That fellow is rather intelligent or I mean rather broad-minded for a foreigner."

"He was working you," said Sammy.

"Working me? Now do you suppose that there's a man on the face of God's earth who can do that? After a while you'll give it out that the waiter worked me."

"No, he was genuine, dad; and another good mark has gone up for you."

"I don't like such talk as that Sammy. Do you think I'm a boy in school, striving for credit marks?"

They walked along smoking in silence, and though the youngster had at the Institute been something of an athlete, the American set him a lively pace with his long stride, a sort of loose-jointed swing of the South. "There's a theatre over there," said the Colonel, "that has been the scene of many a triumph—Daly's—and I can remember when every ham actor that came West professed to have had an interminable run here. But it's changed now. Fashion has shifted its favor further up this shoe-string island." They were on the opposite side from the theatre,

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but the Colonel halted and gazed at it, muttering to himself.

"I don't see anything interesting about it, dad."

"No? But it may hold an interest for you when I have told you something. Your mother played there, a child, years ago; and once she showed me some red powder—dust of the roses that were showered upon her, beautiful little thing."

The boy grasped his arm. "More," he said.

"Not now—not here. Let us wait for a season."

"But, dad, your seasons are sometimes so long. Why all this mystery? Why don't you tell me?"

"I will when we drop into lunch at some quiet place."

They walked on in silence, the Colonel thinking of the girl with the dust of the rose leaves, and the boy with his mind on the girl who to him uttered roses when she talked. The air was brisk and cold, but at Madison Square they halted and sat down upon a bench. An oldish man, shabby and with distress-limp well rehearsed, came along and stopped in

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front of them. "Gentlemen," said he, "won't you please help me along a little? I'm hungry and if you'll please give me a few cents _____,"

"Not to get anything to eat with," the Colonel broke in. "I was reading in a medical journal the other day that we never run so great a risk as we do while eating. Microbes have dropped into the habit of getting on everything we eat, and they are growing worse all the time. They are coming from Europe by the boat load and it is said that one ham sandwich contains——"

"But, gentlemen, I am starving," the beggar protested.

"Yes, I know," said the Colonel, "but it's better to starve in a genteel sort of way than to be murdered by microbes."

Sammy looked in surprise at his stepfather. The American was exhibiting a new phase of character, and he seemed deeply concerned, for his face was serious. But could he remain hard against so distressful an appeal? "Now," the Colonel began, "if you were a drinking man, you——"

"My dear sir, I never took a drink in my life."

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"And that's just the trouble. You have been sober all your life, and that's the sort of a man the microbes are looking for. The article I was reading said that they would swim a river to get at a sober man. They are all arrayed on the side of enmity against the temperance cause. Whisky is bad and I wouldn't counsel any one to use it—except in the arts—but if you could take a drink of rye before eating you might escape with comparatively little risk. But as I say, I couldn't possibly advise anyone to shift one evil and take up another. The one drink intended to protect you against microbes might cause you to form the habit of drunkenness."

"Not me, sir. I know myself well, and I could drink or let it alone."

"Yes, and that's what they all do, one or the other. But I'm afraid. Good-day."

"But my dear sir, I give you the word of an honest man that I would take but one drink."

"Dangerous if you never took one before."

"Oh, I may have taken a drink—years ago."

"Well, yes, but a man changes every seven

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years, and you might not be strong enough to resist now. Good-day."

"You don't know my strength, sir. I am so strong morally that it makes me weak physically."

"That's very good. But the weakest man is always conscious of a strength, of some sort, and I don't care to——"

"But I'm famishing."

"A matter for congratulation, sir. Remember what the rich man said to the beggar—that he would give half his fortune for his appetite?"

"Sir, I didn't expect such treatment."

"Had no right to expect any at all, had you? I have given you my society, and in this town that counts for a great deal—they give me to understand. I have given to you the benefit of my reading, and that ought to count for something. Er—what is or has been your business?"

"I am an actor, sir."

"Actor. Haven't they got a home here for actors?"

"Sir, there is a sort of asylum for a certain sort of actor, but in order to enter into it with any degree of honor one must have

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at some time been pampered by society. In this life, sir, there are very few asylums for the rank and file. One must be insane—or have some distinguishing mark. My only distinction lies in the fact that I was never a rage.”

“Tragedy?”

“Off the stage, sir. Married a woman with a poodle. Loved her, for she was bright, handsome; she loved the dog better than she did me—said that he never came home drunk.”

“I thought you didn’t drink.”

“Sir, the fact that the dog didn’t drink does not argue that I did. My wife was jealous——”

“And yet didn’t love you?”

“Ah, one of the idiosyncrasies of the stage. She was jealous because the man she loved was in love with another woman. I was not the man. This drove me—to hunger. I was about to say drink.”

“What is your name?”

“Sir, I have played Uncle Tom. Don’t ask me.”

“A sad confession,” said the Colonel.

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"But in resignation there is a sort of nobility. Won't you sit down?"

"I should be pleased to if I thought there was anything in it." He took off his plug hat and brushed it with his sleeve. He said that his appearance was somewhat against him. In the basement wherein he had lodged the night before there were a cat and several kittens. During the night they had essayed to have fun with his hat. He was shabby and no longer young; about him there was a pathos conquered by humor, and the American liked him, and regarded him as a find, a genial pick up. "Sit down, please," he said, "and after a few moments we'll go and get whatever you want—bread or wine."

The actor smiled as he sat down beside the American. "I'd just as lieve it would be wine," said he. "The fact is I feel somewhat ashamed that I strove to touch you by fraud. But a man in need of a drink feels not the humiliation of any sort of shift."

"Weren't you sharp enough to know that the food idea could be seen through by—me?" said the Colonel.

"Yes, almost instantly, and I knew that

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you were stringing me. I take you to be a man of importance—out where you live.”

“*Out* where I live. How do you know that I live out?”

“Well, you don’t look as if you lived here. Now if you would be so kind as to take my address as a receipt for the small amount which you are now almost forced by common courtesy to lend me, I——”

“How do you know it is to be a small amount?”

“My dear sir, persistent disappointment has warned me not to hope.”

“What do you consider a small amount?”

“The price of a drink—at present.”

“And a large amount?”

“Anything above a dollar—in these costermonger times.”

“Costermonger times,” repeated the Colonel. “You have never played in that play—*Henry IV.*”

“No, but in other Shakespearean revivals I have ranged with lowly livers not in content, but scrapping for my weekly stipend. Shakespeare breaks out in the country once in a while, and then I find for a time that the hawthorne bush has a sweeter shade than

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the awning; but as a general thing I walk back. Here is my address."

The Colonel took the card, with the name Joseph Aukwall Skidder printed and the name of some unheralded boarding house written with a blunt pencil.

"I suppose you have played at Daly's, in the mellow years gone by."

"Yes, in the years as mellow as candle light. There I was presented to Clara Morris—recommended to her, in fact, in the play as a footman. I was callow, from Maine, and was scared almost out of my wits, but a child, little Mary Barksdale, took me by the hand—Eh, sir?"

The Colonel had jumped to his feet. "Played with her? She was this young chap's mother. Sammy, shake hands with Mr. Skidder."

They shook hands all around. The plug hat was shaken off and it fell on the gravel, but Mr. Skidder, saying that it was of no moment, wiped it with his sleeve, to shake hands again and to congratulate himself that he had found not only friends but almost relatives. He began to talk about the girl who had saved him from his embarrassment, but the

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Colonel shut him off with the flash of a bank note, telling him at the same time that on the proper occasion they would discuss her, which to Sammy meant that the season was again to be deferred, and to the actor it meant so, too, for discreetly he held his peace, until the Colonel gave him ten dollars, and then he broke forth with a monologue of gratitude. The Colonel intimated that of course he would get drunk, but he protested. He said that a man would often get drunk on one dollar, whereas ten dollars, inspiring him with a sense of responsibility, would be employed to better purpose. "An inheritance brings responsibility, and responsibility carries with it a sort of discretion," said he, shaking hands again. "And, sir," he said to the Colonel, "I wish to assure you that this shall not stop here."

"I reckon not," replied the American. "You'll touch me again."

The boy laughed, and catching from his own tones a remembered note in the voice of Imogene, fell at once into deep sadness, thrusting his hands into his pockets and meditatively strolling off down the path.

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"In love, I take it," said Mr. Skidder, looking after him.

"Shot through the heart with a wench's black eye," replied the Colonel. "Now let me see," he added. "I'm not always to be found, but I am putting up at the Waldorf, and——" The actor whistled. There was magic in that name. "Not always to be found," the Colonel continued, "but you are perfectly welcome to come around and look for me. I don't presume to offer advice, but try to do the best you can; and if you do, I think I can make it worth your while. Good-day."

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CHAPTER XII.

MONEY'S BLIZZARD.

They got on a car and were hummed and buzzed down into the tangle of the town's deeper jungle. At Chambers Street they left the car and walked about, with no object save to look here and there at the monstrous vitascope of fret, worry, strife; but the boy was gazing within himself, at a picture in his own heart, and nothing without could afford more than a glimpsing interest. Into Nassau they turned, the Colonel commenting, the boy silent. Already the early editions of the afternoon papers were out, sensations prefaced with eager cries of grim little merchants, Arabs of the street shrewder than Arabs of the desert.

"I have a ticket for myself and one to the gallery of the Stock Exchange," said the American. "I want to show you that place. Wouldn't you like to see it?"

"Yes, anything."

"Sammy, you'd better telephone up to the hotel and have them send your mind down

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to you. Let us cross here. Look out for that hell-bent machine. A man that would so far forget the beauty and the romance of a horse as to take up with one of these devil wagons is hardly deserving of human recognition. They call it progress. And so is a run-away railroad train, tumbling down the mountain, since progress has come to mean speed and nothing more. What do you think of that old actor?"

"Actor? Oh, the man we saw back yonder. I had forgotten him. Why, I guess he's all right in a way."

"Don't you remember his saying that your mother took him by the hand and saved him from his fright?"

"Yes, I think I do. But, dad, I'm not myself to-day. Down in Mexico there is a sort of butterfly, a beautiful thing, that stings; but instead of inflicting a sharp pain, it injects a dead sort of dream, a half insanity, and the victim fights against all remedy. He wants to be stung again and again, until he dies. It seems that I have been stung by one of those butterflies."

"I've been in Mexico, but I never heard of that fly. I think it was born of your own

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fancy and stung you at its birth. And while the dead dream is on you I don't know that it would be of advantage or even of interest for you to look at anything."

"No, I guess not. Dad, don't you think it would be well for me to tell her that I'm not a pauper. She thinks I am."

"Then let her continue to think so. Unless a pauper can win a woman she isn't worth having. Unless she has an ambition to assist you in the making of a fortune she is a misfortune. This may sound old fashioned, and I shouldn't be surprised if it were, but for that matter, so is love itself old fashioned."

"I am afraid to run the risk," the young fellow protested. "Dad, the fact that a woman wants to know that a man is worth something is no evidence that she desires to sell herself to the highest bidder. Love and poverty don't mix well."

The American cleared his throat. "Yes, but love doesn't know that until it finds out by experience; and love ought to be willing to make the test. Is it possible that you would marry her whether she loves you or not?"

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"In the hope that I could finally win her love—yes, I am afraid so. I'm not so strong in such matters as I thought I was."

"Think you have made any very decided impression?"

"Oh, I simply seem to be one of the many that come along the path. If I could only speak what I think, not about love, for it's too soon for me to talk to her about that, but about things in general, books and the like. I can't, however; she robs me and leaves me nothing but every-day commonplaces. Wonder how it would do to go to one of these schools of oratory and take a few lessons?" They were now standing on a corner, back from the tide, and the young fellow searched the Colonel's countenance, evidently in the hope of finding a gleam of approval. And there was a gleam, but it was of mirth. "Sammy! I've heard of a good many absurdities, in the matter of love, but I'm inclined to believe that this takes the lead. Why not go back West, get into the legislature, make speeches and then come back here and address her?"

"Don't make fun of me, dad."

"Surely not. If you think that oratory's

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the thing, why not lead off with 'I come not here to talk,' and so on. Convincing her that you didn't come to talk, and then proceeding to talk you might capture her."

"Dad, I wouldn't make fun of your love for the Widow."

"But I do, Sammy. Mind you, I don't regard her as living in a dazzle far above me. In many respects I believe she's shallow, but I believe that if she were poor, with the same graces she now possesses, I would like to marry her."

"If she were poor, dad, she couldn't have the same experiences, and without these she couldn't have the same graces."

"Hah, now you're talking. Oh, all you need is to be stirred up a bit. You've got the mind."

"Thank you. But so far as wealth is concerned you could give her a better position than she ever had."

"Yes, but some women are wealthy in tastes, in refinements, and she is one of them." He stepped back a little further, away from the edge of the swelling tide. "Strange talk to be holding here," he said.

"Yes," Sammy replied, "but all of these

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eager-faced delvers are working for some one other than themselves. They don't differ so much from the men that dig in the mines. They haven't as much heart, perhaps."

"That is where I am inclined to think we flatter ourselves," said the American. "Roughness doesn't mean inner gentleness. Where one man has been ennobled by poverty, a million have been made better by wealth. Poverty learns to hate the world—disappointed poverty; and hate has never been a blessing. I should put it down that the best man is in moderate circumstances. I mean the man who knows that he never can become rich. Let us go on."

Sammy was not on a tour of surprises, but looking down from the marble gallery upon the turmoil of the Stock Exchange was enough to challenge his interest if not his astonishment. And this was the place whence came the panics that spread over the country and made the West heart-sick and desolate. Here was the furnace wherein values were shriveled and fortunes reduced to ashes. It was more noisy than a midnight dance up the gulch. It would seem that speculation would adopt quieter methods, that neither ruin nor gain

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should be harassed with bellowings and groans. Down there, those men have been compared with ants, but ants are orderly. They were more like apes, in that they all looked old. In one day's time that furnace can make parchment of the blithest countenance. Here at this railing is where philosophy halts and is dumfounded. High up there on the wall the ticking of the clock means much. What changes may have taken place ere the hand moves over the five minute space? Speculators in bone and blood! Human agony condensed and cashed! How many groans in that piece of paper fluttering in a nervous hand? The thumping heart of Wall street! No wonder that men look upon labor with contempt. Was not this a scorn of all legitimate investment? It makes no difference how rich may be the harvest field or how much ore has come from the mine, a stampede here means suicide throughout the country. Gold itself seems to lose value. Rich lands dwindle in worth. Cancer of pretended civilization! The government itself, with its treasury house bulging out with money, is afraid of this place. What goes on here is of more importance than a war across

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the sea. At luncheon, between hasty swallows of coffee, presidents are nominated, and, yea, elected. The monied interests of the country—that is the way those men talk. Gambling interests of the gamblers! Why, there is not money enough in the world to liquidate their failures. It has been written of more than a thousand times. Pulpits have roared or squeaked against it, measured by the wealth and occupation of the respective church. Money's blizzard center!

"What do you think of it?" the Colonel inquired, looking down upon the whirling scene.

"It doesn't stimulate so much of thought as of wonder," Sammy answered. "Nothing that I've ever read of it has given me an idea, I discover now. It looks like a stampede of cattle."

"Yes, but more lacking in heart than heifers and steers. But a man successful down there, Sammy, is of more importance in this town than any statesman in the country. He may be a brute in appearance and in nature and he may be as dull as a woman's pocket knife, but the newspaper would want no better special than something he has said.

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They invent things for him. Some obscure young fellows put gems in the clod's mouth. For a day he rides a giant horse, high in the air, but there comes a time when suddenly the horse stumbles and falls and in the dust the great man rolls. They help him up, dust him off, lead him away; and the newspapers are full of him, but no more gems are put into his mouth. These are reserved for another clod, riding a high horse. Obscurity is desperate for the fallen one. He could not sit down to think. His life has been the windy whirl of shadows. The steady shade is loathsome to him. He hates books, despises man, and so man forgets him, the readers of the newspapers, grabbers after quick editions, search their minds and can just recall having heard of him. Got enough?"

"I had enough before I came in, dad. Shall we return to the hotel?"

"Not now. You remember I spoke of telling you something when the proper season should come. Well, it's here now. Let us go to a restaurant."

Off from the jungle, in a sort of swamp of life, they found a quiet place that looked as if it were about ready to fall. In its day it

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had no doubt been a famous oyster house, known to the middle manhood of Beecher and Greeley, but it was no such thought as this that commended it to the Colonel, for Greeley was an Abolitionist whose newspaper was poisonous to the South and Beecher had in England spoken against Secession. It was wrong, of course—Secession; but at the time when Beecher had spoken and Greeley had written, the South was of the opinion that slavery was just, and this made it just for the time being.

When asked as to what he would like to eat the young man said that it made no difference with him.

"That's all right, Sammy, but I want to tell you that to win at any game you must eat, and deviled ham is more potent than angel food. Before you drift any further in your present sea of distress, get out of the foolish notion that she is more than a human being. I don't see anything on this bill of fare that tempts me very much. Frogs' legs. Strike you?"

"Yes, they're all right."

"Well, I don't know about them. Yes, sir, get that out of your head. You know, Sam-

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my, I like to go about this town almost persuading myself to feel that I am too poor to buy certain things. I never tried to feel economical—when I ought to have done so; but now I like to imagine that I'm poor, and then, in all fairness to truth, I somehow feel a better human being. Do I contradict myself? Did I talk differently a while ago, giving you to understand that the rich are noble? Well, being more or less natural, I am inconsistent. The ship that would avoid the rocks must not always hold to the same course. I am rambling along here until I'm forgetting what I was going to say. Here, young woman," he called, speaking to a waitress, "don't neglect us because we are not noisy." The waitress came forward. He called her child, and she gave to him a receipt for the courtesy—bestowed a tired smile. He asked her about her home, holding in front of him the bit of paper on which in dim purple was mimeographed a list of resources, blurred record of indigestion; and in a vague way she replied that she had no home, and then asked for his order. She was tired, and sometimes weariness looks like modesty to the degree of refinement; so, speaking almost indis-

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tinctly, that he might not shock her with the vigor of his natural voice, he said that he and his friend would take frogs' legs, whereupon she turned and shouted: "Jumpers two." He looked at Sammy and winked, but the young fellow was in a dream and did not see him. The girl placed two glasses of water on the table. "You must have been up late last night," said the Colonel.

"Yes."

"Struggling with the world?"

"Dancin'."

"Oh."

"Coffee?"

"Yes, both of us."

"Draw two," she shrieked. Sammy started as if stung in the ear. "Dancing," said the Colonel. "Well, youth must trip its feet. You liked it, of course."

"It was all right. Brown or white bread?"

"Makes no difference." He handed her a piece of silver. "Thanks," she said and moved off. For a moment the American reflected. "They are all of them human beings, Sammy, these women. Man, the brute, must have been mothered and the mother of the human brute must have been human."

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Surgeons say that woman can stand more pain than a man, that in fact her machinery is not so fine a piece of nerve work."

"It is because woman was born to suffer more," said Sammy.

"Yes, that may be true. I know they can stand more cold."

"Ah," said the boy, "and they can sometimes freeze a man."

"But Imogene is not trying to freeze you, Sammy. It is your own hot imagination that makes you shiver. You have come into a sudden warmth and are not yet tempered to it. But understand, I insist that you must not weaken."

"How weaken?" He looked up as if his spirit were borne upon the wave of a sigh.

"You must not tell her that you have any prospects other than the resources of your profession. Then, if she does not care for you, make a fool of yourself and catch her some other way—if you are so resolved; but unless she really loves you she is not worth picking up in the street. Here she comes." Sammy started. "I mean the girl with the jumpers."

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CHAPTER XIII.

SIM GROGGIN.

The place was deserted with the exception of the girl, who now in the rear end of the room was sitting in oblivious stupor. For a long time the American was silent, meditatively smoking; and then, reaching over he put his hand on the boy's arm. Sammy started. "You are as nervous as a horse," said the Colonel. "I was going to tell you about something that happened away out yonder."

"Yes—thank you."

"Can I bring your mind down to it?"

"I can bring my mind up to it, dad."

"All right. I was just thinking how strange it is that we should be here, in this wilderness of human contention; but for that matter it is strange that we or anybody should be anywhere. The machine makes the world practical, but it does not explain the mystery of life." Again he was silent and the young man waited. "Glick City was on a tremendous boom," said the Colonel, dropping

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the stub of his cigar on a plate. "Already there were half a dozen brick buildings in the town, and we all saw that it was to become one of the famous places of the world. The seventh brick building was an opera house. The date for the grand opening was set for the seventh of October. The company had been engaged and it was fresh from its famous run at Daly's. As a member of the city council, as the owner of a corner lot or so, as a prominent and promising citizen, I was in a box at the first performance of the '*Heart for Heart*.' There had been a dinner with champagne made precious with its long wagon haul across the mountains. The play didn't amount to anything. It was a strain of sentiment and a distress that could have been relieved by one word on the part of the hero—one simple and most natural word; but before I could realize how it came about I was in love—with a girl, the heroine, Mary Barksdale; the young woman, who, as a child, took that fellow Skidder by the hand—your mother." The young man leaned toward him, with his arm on the table. "Yes," he said, his dreamy eyes bursting forth into sparks. "Yes, go on."

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"I don't know that she was beautiful. If I'd been a poet I couldn't have described her—couldn't have painted her if I'd been the most life-like and vivid of painters. She came as a soft yellow light, and with her came a scent from the flowers that grew in out of the way places. But I'll tell it as soberly as I can."

"No," the boy protested, reaching over and grasping the Colonel's hand. "No, don't tell it that way. Make it wild—as it was. Let your story gallop. I want to see its mane flowing in the wind."

"I'll tell it as best I can. But it is incoherent at best. Yellow. Yes, she was a blond—spirit of the gold fields; and when I heard her speak, it seemed to me that I would smother in a glad-grief. I can't describe that, either; it's impossible, and no one but a man in the fix that you're in now could listen to it without laughing. It's absurd, I know. Well, I sat there, killed, embalmed, mummied by her, and that was all I could remember. After the performance there was more champagne, at the hotel, and I lived and died in spots. I got a glimpse of that spirit of pure gold, sitting in the parlor;

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and then I was dead again—until morning when my aching head awoke me. The most of the night had been a dream in its unreality, but the vision of gold was stronger than a dream. It was a truth. At breakfast I heard some news. The manager of the company had run away during the night, leaving the members unpaid and penniless. A soul less selfish would have deplored this state of affairs, but I was thankful for it. Now, in this the season of her misfortune, I might be permitted to approach that thrilling daughter of a god highest on Olympus, for neither virtue, grace, genius, nothing can be safe from the intrusive familiarity which misfortune inspires. A saint in hard luck infuses no spirit of reverence. Not that I did not still worship this goddess, you understand, Sammy. Bless you, I did, but hard luck had humanized her and brought her into clearer view. So, I sent my card up to her and she sent down word that she would see me in the parlor. Ah, and there I sat, talking to her. I don't know how she got into the room; I couldn't tell whether she had walked or floated, but there she was and I was talking to her—gad, about mining

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stocks and the prospects of a railroad. Finally I managed in what might to her have appeared as a cool sort of way to tell her that I was at her service and that it would give me a great deal of pleasure—business pleasure, of course, to help her to the next town or to any other place under the sun. She laughed a sad laugh and replied that to her there was no other town. She had no home, no prospects; and as she was really not a success on the stage, she did not look forward to another engagement. I told her that it was my understanding that she was a leading lady of Daly's and at this her laughter rang out like a zither running riot. What one was advertised by a cheap manager to be and what one really was—how different, she said, and I said that, yes, I knew, which was a lie, for I knew nothing about it. All this time I was thankful to find that she was humanizing—or I'd better say materializing; and I found, and to my delight, too, that she was not so beautiful as she had appeared on the stage. We are more encouraged by a flaw than a perfection, you know. But what was to be done? If she had no prospects, how could we set about to

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make them? She said that she would like to quit the stage, as she had always hated it; and she didn't know but that she might find work in the town. She knew something of books, as her failure and consequent humiliation had often driven her to them, and she might go in as an assistant librarian. Yes, she might have done that, but a wheelbarrow could have held all the books in Glick City. But an idea leaped like an athlete into my mind. I told her that we had no library, but ought to have one, that our people would without doubt feel thankful to her for the suggestion, and that if she could wait until a mule train could bring the books we would start up a shop of letters. I was in earnest, but she was amused and again I heard the music of the riotous zither. She studied a while and then she said that she might take up a school, and this set me on my feet in a moment. I said something absurd, of course—that she had come to inspire us with a knowledge of our necessities, and I declared that I would rush forth at once and get the school ready. So, hastening to my office, I drew up a paper and began to circulate it for signers. There had already been several

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schools started, but soon we had another, and by the next morning at opening time Miss Barksdale was ready and so were we. The school house was a livery stable and an undertaker's shop combined, the lower part given over to baled hay and coffins, but the upper floor served our purpose well, and here came every day except Saturdays and Sundays, this divine creature, who in a mimic profession had been as she thought a failure. She was too good and pure for earth, and of course the stage was not her home. She couldn't afford to live at the hotel, but in the private family of a pardoned and prosperous stage robber she found a pleasant home, and it was here that I called on her night after night, with my heart dancing, but I talked of practical things, because she seemed, with all of her romantic look, a sane and practical little body. My business partner was Sim Groggin. He made himself prominent by shooting a robber named Dix—Miss Barksdale's landlord, by the way—had tended him through long disability and had obtained a pardon for him. Groggin was about as game a man as I had ever seen, and as bravery was the gauge of all admiration out there in those

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days, I gave him my friendship as well as my business confidence. He had been expelled from Yale on account of some triviality, knocking a professor on the head, or something like that, and this added to his standing. With all of his other arts and accomplishments he was a sort of Jim the Penman. There was a bank in Glick City and with forgery he could have robbed it, but he kept the most of his natural impulses well in hand and used his cleverness sparingly. You have never heard of him, have you?"

"No, dad. But does he hold much of a place in your story?"

"A vital place. He wasn't so handsome, but he was rather taking, with a sort of dashy air, and it gave me some little uneasiness when I could not help but observe his attentions to Miss Barksdale. One night as we were sitting by the stove, beneath a smoky lamp that threw black shadows here and there, I asked him how far he was in earnest with regard to her, and he laughed and said, 'Your preserves, Bill. I like her and that is all.' I thought it best, however, to hurry up matters, so one night while I sat alone with Miss Barksdale, I began to edge up toward

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the final point. Gab comes to some men early and to others late. It had not come to me—wasn't in bloom, so I had to struggle with myself. The fact was that in her presence I didn't know what to talk about except my own insane love and I didn't know how to lead up to an expression of it. I had written several notes to her, but my pen stammered. She didn't try to make me think she was timid. She always met my frightened eye with a quiet frankness, and this always frightened my eye still more. I remember that it was drawing toward midnight, and still I had made no advance. I had been summoned to set out early the next morning to go on important business to Denver, and I shuddered to think of leaving my heart's affairs in an unsettled state. But soon came the time for me to take up my hat. Ah, how well I can recall that scene and the talk that followed. 'Must you be going?' she asked, and I stood first on one foot and then the other and told her that I was compelled to go. Then followed silence. I turned my hat round and round. 'Be gone long?' 'About a week—maybe two,' I answered. Another silence. My hat fell upon the floor. We both stooped

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at the same time to pick it up and bumped our heads together. This made us both laugh and she looked as if her mouth were full of diamonds. Again I fumbled with my hat, but the laughter had made me bolder. I took hold of her hand, and how frail a little thing it was, the veins showing blue. I kissed it—and it fluttered, a bird, and it flew away. But I caught it again, drew her to me—kissed her, and then in a dam-broken torrent I told her of my love. I didn't ask her to marry me—but she must have known—all I wanted then was to tell her of my love and to hear her whisper, with her head against my breast, that she loved me. I went home happy. Beneath the shadow-throwing lamp Sim Groggin sat, reading some sort of up the gulch book; and in my bubbling happiness I told him all that had passed. Well, at daylight the next morning I took the stage. And, two days after reaching Denver I received a letter from her. Letter? It was only a line. 'I don't want to see you again, you brute.' What did it mean? That wolf had written to her in my name—had said that I was playing with her. This all came out afterward, you see. I'm making it short. I didn't have

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sense enough to demand or ask for an explanation. I thought that she had been acting a part and had believed that I was acting—for a purpose far from noble. The scoundrel wrote to me—his letter came quickly after hers—telling me that she was gone away—that she had stolen jewelry and that he was going forth to fetch her back. He was coming through Denver, he said, as it was supposed she had gone that way. I met him—I was more dead than alive—and heard his story. He said that the people of Glick City were laughing at me, and I knew then that I was not to go back there. So Groggin and I reached a settlement of our affairs and I went away, heart-broken. Five years afterward, in San Francisco, I learned the truth. The hell-hound had tried to marry her. She had refused him, and one year before the time of this revelation she had married your father. I went back to Glick City, went with no other purpose than to kill Groggin. But he wasn't there. No one knew where he might be found. I saw—Mary. I saw that she was dying of consumption. I heard you—crying, pale little thing. Isn't that enough?"

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"Yes, dad."

For a long time they were silent.

"Dad——" He reached over, took the Colonel's hands and pressed them to his face, and when the American took them away they were wet.

Silent they sat, the place quiet, the girl dozing.

"What became of him, dad?"

"He went to Australia, I heard. I started to go, but in San Francisco I was taken sick and for seven months was in a hospital. But I had employed a man to look for him. He returned without information. Since then I have looked for him, every time I heard that he had been seen; and not long ago I learned that he was here. That is the reason I came."

"If you find him, dad, let me—kill him."

"No. You couldn't do that here—very well."

"But if you find him what are you going to do?"

"I don't know."

"Yes, you do, dad; you always know."

"I haven't decided beyond the fact that I want to feast my eyes upon him. Now you

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know why I don't want my real name known here."

"Have you employed detectives?"

"Yes—and they have had track of him, they say. But I don't believe it. Still, I haven't given up hope. More than once I have been ready to take my leave of this town, but always something has held me back, and for a good purpose, I am inclined to think." He mused. "Yes, to feast my hungry eyes on him."

"And when you find him, you will not weaken?"

"No. Forgiveness is as often the sign of weakness as of strength. But beyond feasting my eyes upon his countenance—I can't see beyond that. But there must be something more or I should not be so impelled to find him. Shall we go now? Here, girl."

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CHAPTER XIV.

NIGHT LAMPS IN HER EYES.

No appointment had been made, but that evening the Colonel and Sammy met the Widow and Imogene in the drawing room, and as the place was filled with some sort of society holding a festival, they went for a walk in the air. The night was cool, but not disagreeable, and they walked up as far as the park. Sammy thought that on the part of the girl this feat of pedestrianism was remarkable, but she surprised him by saying that when she was in the country, in England, she sometimes made it a point to walk ten miles a day. She had drawn him off from the Widow and they were now walking alone. He had not noticed the separation and if he had it would have been viewed purely in the light of a chance division. He listened entranced to her small talk, the whims of her brother Dick, and he was ready to weep when she told him that a cat had killed and eaten her canary bird. He swore that all cats ought to be dead. She demurred at this. As a rule

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she liked cats, only she didn't think that they ought to be so heartless as to kill a poor little bird. Come to think of it, he had always liked cats, too, but he didn't understand why they should eat birds. There were plenty of mice in the world. She said that she was afraid of mice. He didn't like them very well. Once he baited a hook with one and caught a black bass. She said that it must have been a cat fish, and he roared with laughter. He said it was the brightest thing he ever heard. He wanted to tell the Colonel, and then for the first time noticed the separation.

"I wonder where dad and your aunt went?"

"Oh, they'll take care of themselves. Are you getting tired?"

"Oh, no. I could walk—walk on throughout eternity." He looked about him. "Grim old rocks, these. They look older than the rocks out in the West. Perhaps it is because history has left its visiting card lying upon them."

"Their history is short in comparison with the rocks of Europe," she said. He agreed and looked about for something else, but there was nothing save leafless trees, more

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rocks and a pond of water ruffling in the light. She said that he must have had many an adventure in the West, and he hemmed and hawed, trying to make one, but romantic necessity was not the mother of invention. He wanted music and strove to say something to make her laugh. She discovered the trick and laughed for him. Then he laughed. They halted for a moment where it was light. He looked at her, into her eyes, and he thought of something the Colonel had said—feasting himself with a look, but his feast was of love. Deep in her eyes he saw the night lamps gleaming—fathoms deep, they seemed. She turned her face slightly and the lamps went out, leaving a twilight, a mellow dusk. They walked on, she with long and slow stride, and he wondered at her ability to keep step with him. It was time for one of them to say, "it seems that I have known you so long a time," and she said it.

"I was just about to say the same thing," he replied. "Strange."

She said that it was strange. Then they laughed and halted again. Her full mouth looked like a half kiss, he thought, gazing down upon her lips and they were so near

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him now, but they seemed to float away, further off. Her cloak was unbuttoned. He gazed at her neck, her throat; and then in her eyes he saw the lamps gleaming again. She looked up and a lamp was supplanted by a star. They walked on, going they knew not whither. Remembering what the Colonel had said, that she must be won by his worth alone, he wondered aloud if there were as much of opportunity for a young man to make a fortune as there had been in the days when penniless young youths came to New York and compelled the financial world to recognize them. She replied that for ability and enthusiasm there always was and always would be opportunity. Opportunity came from within. Then she spoke of the Colonel. If he had come to New York years ago he might have been a great man. "Auntie says he is one of the most charming men she ever saw; and the beauty or, rather I should say, the nobility of it all is that he doesn't imagine a woman in love with him if she happens to utter a sentiment. Men are so vain. It is getting so that a woman is almost afraid to be civil to the most of them."

He felt himself swallowing something.

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Was this a hint that he was accepting too much for granted? Well, he would show her that he was not vain. "What is his business—the Colonel's?" she asked.

"Well, just at present isn't in any business."

"I thought he must be a lawyer. I hope he is well enough off not to be worried."

He swallowed again. "Well, he's not in financial distress."

"I'm glad of that. I should hate to see him distressed. Shall we turn down this way?"

"Just as you like."

"Do you know why I asked?"

"Oh, out of a sort of interest, I suppose."

"No, auntie wanted me to find out."

"You don't say. Doesn't she know he's married?"

"Of course, but that makes no difference. She didn't know but that at one time he was about to cut his stay short because of money—and if that is true, why she said that she would like to lend him enough to see him through. That's her all over when she likes any one."

"God bless her soul," he said, swallowing no lumps now.

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Onward they walked, slowly, and the low-lying wind, rising from the ground, blew her skirts about his ankles, tangling his walk, and it thrilled him thus to be clogged with a part of her. Rounding a hillock out of the wind they halted again and sat down on a bench and she buttoned her cloak and now he could not see her throat gleaming in the light of the night eyes of the park, but in his mind he saw it, rounded satin. She said that her aunt and the Colonel must have gone home.

"They know the way and aren't likely to get lost," he replied, and then asked her if she were cold, making a timid motion as if he would take the temperature of her hand, and though she was motionless at the time, yet he fancied a gesture of fright on her part and his own hand fell hot and limp, curled like a scorched leaf. She was not cold, she said.

"But you are shivering."

"The wind wailing among the bushes makes me think and I shiver when I think. After all it is *thought* that is the tragedy of life." In no book had he ever found so great a saying and he pondered over it. It was not possible that she could ever learn to love him,

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with such thoughts in her head. He wondered what she would say next and he waited. She began to speak and along his nerves he felt her words tingling even before he heard them. "Sometimes there comes one into our lives who permits us to utter the truths lying idle within us and for this we ought to be thankful."

"Yes," he repeated several times, remembering that the Colonel had said something like this, striving to think of something to fit. He thought of "truth is mighty and will prevail," but that wouldn't do, and besides it was not his own. What was his own? Was anything his own? "Truth is so much bigger than fact," he said.

"Yes," she replied, "fact is a photograph, while truth is a painting," and within him he felt his hope of ever winning her gasp out its life. He must cap that or be utterly lost. "Yes, fact is a truth stripped of all grace."

"And then we have the naked truth," she laughed, and in a dumb chill he listened to her music. "I wonder what time it is getting to be," she said, when her music had ceased. He took out his watch, held it to catch the light, saw the hour leap forward and told her

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that it was nearly eleven. Gracious alive, she had no idea that it was nearly so late. "You are a killer and an embalmer of minutes and a builder of monuments to hours," he said, and felt that at last he had uttered something, and she must have thought so, too, for she muttered, "beautiful."

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CHAPTER XV.

A PROJECT FORMING.

The Colonel and the Widow soon tiring of the cold wind in the park returned to the hotel, and in the Turkish room they sat waiting for Sammy and Imogene. The American had been talking of the age of youth, declaring that we are still young as long as we have something in which we take enthusiastic interest. "I don't mean in the way of money-getting," he said, "for we have authority and experience to tell us that avarice increases with age. "It is rare, madam, that one meets a generous old man. It doesn't argue generosity when decrepitude appropriates a great fund for charity, nor is it mere kindness when near the close of a grinding life a man builds libraries. Man, scrapping for some sort of immortality, builds a monument in the name of charity, hoping that his own name may live beneath it. If I should tell you of something that I have for a long time had in mind you would laugh at me."

He expected her to say that she would not,

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but she replied that perhaps she should. In a puzzled frown he looked at her. "Don't you know that there's nothing more sacred than a hobby? And would you make sport of a hobby?"

"I didn't say that I should laugh. I said perhaps."

"Ah, but when perhaps a woman would laugh she will. However, I'm going to tell you any way. You've seen a play called Jim the Penman, haven't you?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, into my life there came a sort of Jim the Penman play, long before I had ever seen the acted drama, and perhaps before it was written. In it is embodied a good deal of Western life, and at odd times I have written it out in the form of a drama. As it now stands it couldn't be played on a ten-acre lot, but I was thinking of getting some one to help me with it—make it walk and talk, you understand. I wouldn't bother with a manager; I would rent a theater for a certain length of time."

She was too much surprised to laugh at his whim—not surprised that he had a play, but that he thought of renting a theater in New

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York. "Why, Colonel, that would involve a perfect storm—a regular blizzard of expense."

"Perhaps so, but I can see about it. I met an actor to-day, man named Skidder—ever hear of him?" She shook her head. "Well, I believe he could make my play go. And besides, he is out of a job."

Now she laughed. "Ah," she said, "no Rockefeller could afford to put on a play for every actor that is out of a job."

"Hum—don't suppose any Rockefeller would ever care how many players were out of jobs. But this fellow Skidder appeals to me. I never saw him before, but in a way he comes out of my past. I'll drop him a note and tell him to come around to see me."

"But, Colonel, can you afford it?" In the tones of her voice and in the look that she gave him there was real interest. About every good woman there was something just a little old-timey, he thought, and as now he studied her he saw with his memory-eye many a graceful and gracious woman of the past, some of them with their needles and some singing sweetly like birds because their hearts were light. All of the world shrewdness

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seemed to have melted from the Widow's eyes, leaving them aglow with a soft and kindly luster; and he mused to himself that her mother-love could make any son great. Then he fell to wondering whether within her the maternal instinct were strong or whether convention had killed it.

"Madam, if man had done only the things that he could afford to do, we should still be trudging through the mire of the dark ages."

"I can't agree to that. It was doing the things he could not afford that has made the world miserable, that has filled it with mental and physical disease."

"Madam, you have now raised an issue upon which we will not argue. I uttered but a half truth and you have made it wholly false."

"Ah, Colonel, your gallantry would make any opposition to you false as dicers' oaths."

"Good, madam; good, though I don't deserve it. But going back, I'd like to put that play on. I just want to see it, and if it pleases me it wouldn't make any difference whether it's a success or not. I wouldn't regard it as an investment, but as a game the mere playing of which is worth the money."

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"Ah," she said, looking at him through shrewd, half-open eyes, "and you would send for your wife to be present at the first presentation, wouldn't you?"

"Ur—madam, my wife is exceedingly religious and under no consideration would she go into a show house. She bears the distinction of never having wept over East Lynne."

She laughed. "Let us hope that you'll not be forced to weep and to pull out your hair over your own."

"If I am forced to pull out enough hair to make a rope to hang myself I still shall have accomplished something."

"Yes, you will have made a rope."

They looked at each other and laughed. After a time she wondered what had become of Imogene and Sammy, and the Colonel said, "Oh, never mind them; they'll come along after a while and in good season, ringing their golden bells. Yes, in good time. Now wouldn't it be a joke if I, a staid citizen of the quiet wilds, should create a sensation with a play? Man nearly always believes that it is safe to defer intellectual employment. Those who believe that it is dangerous to defer attempts at physical achieve-

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ment, flatter themselves with the close-hugged notion that the mind grows stronger with advancing years. This, perhaps, is the reason, madam, that I have put off the production—this together with the fact that the men to whom I've shown it thought that it might be well set for some indefinite time in the future."

She asked if he had read it to many managers. "I think I read up one copy of it," he said. "And then I threw the new copy into my trunk. That is what a man says after he has carefully laid a thing away, you know. No, I don't demand that you should ask to read it. That would seem the proper move, but proper moves are sometimes tiresome and inconvenient."

"But, Colonel, I beg your pardon for saying this, but if you find that you haven't enough ready money to meet your purposes, you——"

"Madam, I thank you, but I can manage to raise enough."

"That is fortunate, but in the event that you can't, won't you let me join with you?"

"Ah, backwoods," he said, "you don't hold all the hearts. Madam, you are so noble as

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to make yourself short-sighted. Unless you have money to throw at a bird——”

“But have you that much, Colonel?”

“A man may have little and yet feel that he has enough to throw at his own bird. I could not permit you to cast a penny at a strange lark.”

She smiled, and in the light of her countenance he caught a sweetly sad reminder of the actress girl who had died long ago; and now he remembered that from the first he had noted a resemblance between them, and he wondered why he had not acknowledged it to himself. A stronger love may be built upon the foundation of a love that was lost. Distress has created many an ideal. Had he created one? he asked himself.

“Don’t you believe that a man and a woman can be friends?” she inquired, as if it were a serious matter on which she desired exact information, and with a sudden lowering of sentimental vitality he answered that he had no doubt of it. Then he thought: “What a fool I am. She thinks I’m married. How could she look toward being other than a friend? Shall I tell her that I was joking when I spoke of my wife? No, it would

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freeze the current of her freedom. Let me make of her if I can so dear a friend that it might be unconscious love. She has called me quaint, but quaintness cannot pass beyond a certain interest. We don't fall in love with the quaint, the funny, but with the sublime and the tragic. Let me hold her as a friend." Now she looked more like Mary Barksdale—Mary, maturer and stronger, a delicate vitality rounded with grace. "Madam, there is a place not far from here that I should like to visit with you."

"I'm sure it would give me pleasure, Colonel. What place is it?"

"The grave of Benjamin Franklin."

"He wasn't buried in New York, was he?"

"Madam, the past has contained several great men who were not buried in New York, except for a time socially."

"Oh, you ought to thank me for that opportunity. Of course, I know American history in a vague way—and that is the only sort of history that has ever been written of this country—but I confess that I don't know where every great man is buried, and I suppose that all of the really great ones *have* been buried."

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"Either that, madam, or they were drowned and their bodies not recovered. Franklin is buried in Philadelphia."

"*Sleeps* there," she smiled.

"Ah, and you ought to thank me for that opportunity. Will you go over there with me, sometime?"

"Yes, any time."

"To-morrow morning?"

"Yes, if not too early. Graves will keep, you know."

"Ha, his ought to be well kept. He was perhaps the only world man we have ever produced. Will eleven o'clock be too early for you?"

"No. Then I'll meet you here at that time."

"If it should be good weather?"

"Oh, the weather makes no difference. Here they come."

Sammy and Imogene entered the room. Saying the expected thing, the girl remarked that they had enjoyed a delightful stroll and had no idea that it was so late. "Auntie, have you been back long?"

"Yes," she answered, and both Sammy and the Colonel looked distressed. Soon

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they bade the women good night, and the Colonel went to Sammy's room, and when the door had been shut he looked at the boy and said, "Well?"

"I don't know, dad. Sometimes she seems to warm toward me, but my happiness is cut short by the fear that she's playing me. Do you think she is?"

"Don't know," answered the American, shaking his head. "A woman may be simple and practical, but i'gad, she's always a mystery, so far as I'm concerned. And I want to say right here that the Widow is throwing her golden hooks into me. Well, I'll go to my room and write to that fellow Skidder. I'll tell you all about it some other time. Sleep well. Good night."

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CHAPTER XVI.

AT BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S TOMB.

Early the next morning the Colonel heard the rain beating at his window, and he feared that all present idea of his pilgrimage with the Widow to the grave of Franklin was drowned. But when he met her at eleven o'clock she was arrayed in a waterproof, and declared her readiness to go at once though the rain had in no wise abated. She called him dear, by mistake, or in unconscious imitation of the shopgirl who makes current slang of ancient terms of endearment; and he looked sharp at her, expecting a pretty confusion, a blushed apology, but she simply smiled, which led him to believe that she had not been conscious of her thrilling slip of the tongue. After a weak show of arguing on the part of the Widow, Imogene had declined to go, and Sammy therefore "went lame" in a moment, as our wayward brother of the race track would say. This pleased the Colonel, as he had intended the company to be

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narrowly limited. They took a cab for the Twenty-third street ferry, and with the rain lashes whipping at the windows, they sat for a time in silence.

"Delicious." This was what she said, and he replied:

"If you hadn't said it I should have thought there was a better word."

She smiled at him. "Well, isn't there?"

"Your utterance of it has made a better one impossible," he declared, with a Southerner's oratorical emphasis. At times it may be important to know whether or not one has sighed, and at this moment he wondered if she hadn't, but there was no way of finding out. He couldn't very well ask her; it would sound odd to his own ears to blurt forth from silence with, "I beg your pardon, ma'am, but did you sigh?"

Out on the water they looked back at the towers, dragons of trade, ghastly in the mist. She spoke of the great, unhealthful turmoil they were leaving.

"And yet you love it and would shudder at the thought of leaving it permanently," said the American, deftly touching into better arrangement the waterproof about her shoul-

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ders, for they were standing where the rain splashed.

"Yes, I should shudder at the thought of leaving any place—permanently."

"Even the West, which you have not seen? Surely you wouldn't shudder to leave the West, having never seen it."

She laughed. "I don't think your little sarcasms are so timely now—when directed at me. I mean with regard to the West."

"And why not?"

"Because you have made the West a land to be sighed for."

"I hope you don't say that in earnest."

"But I do say it in earnest. Why did you hope I didn't? Tell me."

"Oh, it wouldn't be right to make a human being so proud as it would make me."

She looked at him and a memory-scent came floating back to him, a geranium. How much it had cost him, that geranium! From a hothouse in Denver he had brought it, for Mary Barksdale, because it was a flower loved by her. The stage coach encountered a great drift of snow, but he wrapped his coat about the flowerpot to keep life in the leaf; he blew his warm breath upon it to drive away the

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frost. He kept it alive, and when he gave it to the girl she smiled, just as this woman was smiling now—and the scent of the flower arose and he felt its perfume tingling in his senses.

"You will never leave off joking me," she said.

"Madam, I——"

"Don't call me madam."

"Ah, what shall I call you?"

"I wish you would call me Margaret."

"Then you'd have to call me Jim."

"Oh, my gracious, that wouldn't do. I should feel that I had committed a crime. But I wish I could tell you what I think you are—without appearing rude or familiar. Wish I could."

"But can't you?"

"No, you might not understand."

"If I am so short on understanding I oughtn't to be called anything but fool. Tell me—or I'll step off into the river."

"I'll step with you."

"Ah, a tragic two-step. But what is it you would like to call me? Out with it."

"Oh, it isn't so very bad."

"I hope not. But what is it?"

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"Something I always think of you as being."

"They have a word out West—may have come from down here. Word chump. Is that it?"

"You know better than that. I'm half inclined now not to tell you at all."

"Had you intended to tell me?"

"Not when I first spoke, but was afterward almost persuaded. Aren't we foolish?"

"I can answer for myself. I have been foolish ever since I first saw you."

"Now, Colonel, don't talk that way. Remember you are married."

"Yes, I had forgotten."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"What, to forget my troubles—I mean my happiness? When a man forgets his own happiness it shows that he's not selfish."

For a time she was silent and then she said: "You know if I thought that I were wronging any—woman it would make me miserable."

"Ah, but when has woman become so little of a woman as not to wrong woman?"

"That's unworthy of you, Colonel."

"Then I take it back and swallow it like a

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swamp man taking a dose of medicine, and nowhere on this earth is there anything as bitter as chill medicine. I knew an old fellow down in the cypress that——”

“We are nearly ready to land. And you haven’t given me a chance to tell you.”

“You wouldn’t tell me. But we’ve got time enough.”

“Now that I’ve come to think more about it, why it wouldn’t sound very well. But when meant as I mean it—nothing then could be bad about it. And there are so few men exactly what you are. Wait, I’ll tell you. Lovable. That’s the word. Lovable. Is that so bad?”

“Oh, no—it’s—I might say it’s all right. I mean, I thank you if you have brought yourself down to that grade. You don’t know me. I’m as mean as—well, ask Sammy.” The passengers were hastening off. “Margaret,” he said, and in silence they went ashore.

They had not more than time to get the tickets and catch the train. For a long while they were silent. There was nothing to look at save the rain, blurred houses in mist; but neither of them lamented the lack of the sun.

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Into the lathe of his mind the Colonel had put a thought and was turning it round and round, sometimes rapidly and then with slowness, the thought of whether or not he should tell her that in his case there was no woman to wrong. But the lathe broke and the thought flew off into the space of indecision. After all it was better not to tell her. As it was they were making sufficient progress. If she were in love with him her fear of wronging his supposed wife would be proof enough. And what a thrill to think that he had torn her love from her. We respect morality; we teach it, we enforce it upon those who are dependent upon us, but man would like to know that a woman loves him regardless of all law. Especially does this seem to be true when he has passed out of youth into experience. Less capable of loving then, he would compel more love from others. More honorable, perhaps, toward man, he is less so toward woman. Thus the American mused, but he denied his self-assertion that he was not as capable of giving love now as on that night when he held Mary Barksdale in his arms.

"Are you tired?" he asked, looking at her

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hair, her ears as she sat next to the window, with her eyes turned toward the rain.

She looked around, into his eyes. "Oh, not at all. I was wondering——"

"What were you wondering?"

"Oh, whether or not I had said too much. We can always tell by our conscience, and mine hurts me—just a little."

"You can't always put faith in conscience. A thing so educated might be taught to tell an untruth."

"I am almost tempted to wish that I hadn't said it."

"I don't blame you, for in the first place it wasn't deserved; it wasn't appropriate."

"Oh, it isn't that, but on account of—some one else."

"I hope, Margaret, that you'll not let the some one else worry you. What I give to you belongs to no one else. What I give is your own, for you created it."

She was looking away. He saw the color mounting, saw her cheek glow red and then turn pale.

"I don't believe it's raining quite so hard," she said. It was—raining harder, but he said that he didn't think so either, and though she

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turned and looked into his eyes, neither of them saw absurdity. They were silent. He was dreaming when she spoke again. "You must never say again what you said just now."

"What was it I said?"

"Is your memory so short?"

"It is longer than a rope that would serve to hang me."

"No, not so long as a handkerchief turned caticornered if you can't remember what I said just now."

"Ah, but it might be as long as an endless chain and then not recall anything you said that should not have been said."

They seemed to think that this was a serious conversation, and it was but natural that a silence should fall. It did fall and long it lay.

"Yes, I'm sorry I said it. And I suppose you are surprised to find me so weak when you had thought me strong. I don't know why, however, that you should have thought me strong. I don't know that you did think so. But the strongest women have their weak moods."

"Yes," he said, "their charming moods."

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When a woman thinks she is strong, she's quarrelsome. Her strength lies in her determination to do something she doesn't want to do, whether it be right or wrong."

"When a man is put to for anything to say he philosophizes about woman. He doesn't know anything about her in the first place."

"If we can believe Writ it was in the first place that he found out pretty much all he knows about her."

"Oh, that old Eden story. Any religion ought to be ashamed to foist it. And with all of her self-sacrifice, her age after age of devotion, woman has not been able to live it down. Sometimes it angers me when I see the steeple of a church, for it is the sign that here is told over and over again the story of woman's treachery to God. Suppose we take a train back without going to the grave of a man who believed——"

"He was a philosopher and not a fanatic," the Colonel broke in. "He was brave enough to win and marry the girl who had once laughed at him, when she first saw him, a gaunt youth, going along the street eating bread."

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She laughed. "Oh, he did. Well, I don't see anything so very game in that."

"It showed forgiveness and that is sometimes brave."

"His eating of bread proved his vegetarianism, and that is not so very bold. I believe it is raining harder."

He looked out and said that he believed so, too, though the truth was that the clouds were lighter and the rain drops smaller. "We'll soon be there," she said. "And what are we going to do when we get there?"

"See that the grave is kept green and come back."

"I am tempted to say that you are hateful."

"And if you did you'd not regret it—as you did before."

"Thought you didn't remember what I said before."

He smiled at her as she turned from the window. "You have seen a rose jar, haven't you? Well, everything you say goes into the rose jar."

"Ah, and there to crumble," she laughed.

"There to perfume," he replied, bowing.

They got off in a drizzle. The Colonel

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inquired of a cabman if he knew of a restaurant wherein Benjamin Franklin used to practice vegetarian economy. He didn't know the place, but if the gentleman would name the neighborhood he might find it. Franklin! The name was familiar enough. He knew of some Franklins in the second-hand clothing business. "Well," said the Colonel, "drive us to the oldest looking eating house you can find."

Evidently he knew where it was, for straightway he drove to a place that might have marked the laying of the first brick in the town. It was called the Home Oyster House, and in the doorway an infant sat, and with the handle of a broken knife was drawing upon the floor a diagram of the mysterious world, a map of that eternity which lies behind us all.

There was sand on the floor and cobwebs hung from the ceiling. The oak tables, heavy as a ship's timber, were without cloths, and so old and so polished were they that they shone like dusky mirrors. The chairs looked as if they might have come out of a continental courtroom. From some remote depth came the wheezy notes of an accordeon.

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A tired-looking woman took up the child and placed it further back into the room. Then she presented herself to the Colonel and the widow.

"How old is your little girl?" the Colonel inquired.

"Boy," said the woman.

"Ah? Well, the better for him, perhaps. Now let me see what we want."

There was no bill of fare and the woman told him what she had, mainly mutton and oysters. The Colonel asked if she knew how long the place had been an oyster house, and she answered that her grandfather had kept it as such and that it had been the same under administrations running far back behind his time. Then the Colonel knew that Franklin must have darkened the door with his generous bulk; and thus flavoring his meal, he ordered oysters in every style. "Have you enjoyed your trip?" he inquired of the Widow when the woman had gone, and she answered: "It has been delightful." Then after a meditative silence she remarked: "I wonder what somebody would think if she should see us sitting here together?"

"Guess she'd think we were hungry."

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"Yes, I am going to take back what I said. You aren't lovable any longer."

"That's true, except as it would imply that I had possessed that quality, at some time or other. The fact is, Margaret—you see I'm not going to surrender *that* liberty—fact is, that I'm as unlovable as a hedgehog. I am inclined to be polite, but as a general thing politeness is a glossy garment to cover a meanness. Under certain conditions I might have passed for an average man, but as it is I am small enough to be revengeful. There is a man in this world that I hope one day to kill."

"Why, Colonel, how could you?"

"That's what I'm thinking about; how can I? I'm trying to find him."

"I hope you haven't an appointment to meet him at Franklin's grave."

"No, but just as likely to meet him there as anywhere."

She looked down and for a time she pondered. "And is that the reason you didn't go home when you were ready?"

"It is the reason I came, but not the reason I didn't go."

"The coming of your adopted son——"



"HE'S WORTH MORE THAN ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD."

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"Even before he came up to where I was standing I had decided not to go. I wanted to see something at least once more—your eyes."

"Don't—you must not say that—I shall not permit it."

"But I have said it."

"I shall not permit you to repeat it. Remember that, please. Oh, that little fellow is about to tumble out."

She ran to the door, gathered up the youngster, who was in no danger of falling, and kissed his toiled-stained face. The child looked at her with his wondering eyes. The woman came in. "Put him down, miss. He's not clean enough for you to handle. Oh, Marcus, what a face you've got. I just can't keep him looking like anything; he gets into such mischief."

"Let me hold him—if he'll stay. Dirty as he is, madam, he's worth more than all the money in the world."

"Yes, he's everything to me. His father died in November, and his sister—the only girl I had, went away with some man and—do let me wipe his face just a little."

"I wish he were mine," said the widow.

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"I love dirty babies. They seem to have more character than clean ones."

The Colonel came forward. "Let me look at him," said he. "I am a judge of babies—sometimes I sit on the supreme bench of the baby show. And i'gad, madam, this one takes the premium. Here it is," and upon the youngster's palm he placed a twenty-dollar gold piece.

"Oh, sir," the woman cried out, "he can't possibly take that."

"If he doesn't, madam, I'll leave your house and never darken your door again. I am appointed by the government to seek out deserving babies, and I have given him the premium provided for by law. If our oysters are ready I wish you'd bring them, as we are in something of a hurry."

"Yes, sir, I will. Marcus, thank the government gentleman. Oh, but what is your name, sir?"

"I'm number seventeen, madam."

"Oh, Marcus, shake hands with number seventeen. Come on, now, with mamma. You are rich—yes, you are rich. God bless you, sir."

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CHAPTER XVII.

READ ALL THE TIME.

The rain had ceased and the day, female with a tenderness as of grief, had wrapped about her face a veil of mists. At the grave of an immortal one of earth, the American and the Widow stood, he bare of head, looking on with reverence, and she looking with wonder at him as if she half expected him to break forth into some sort of wild ceremony. "Modern times, thy greatest clay," he said. He looked at her as if he expected her to charge him with exaggeration, but she said nothing. "Other Americans have been great," he went on, "great for their country, but this man was great for the world and for all time. European science laughed at him, and he compelled it to drop to its knees and sue for pardon of its ignorance. Oxford tittered and then shouted. And after threading life's busy ways, here he lies, but in that light over yonder his spirit twinkles. His mind was the electric light. His was the first thought that flew about the world in the

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twinkling of an eye. Buried here, but living in every hall of science. He had but one brother, the master of the ideal world, Shakespeare, while he the younger was master of the world material. The civilization of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries was his offspring. The glory of the past was the sword. The glory of the future, the lamp; and this man made the lamp anew. Once I saw a comet and I imagined that it was Franklin, waving a scarf of flame at the earth. And though he was so great, the world is not yet ready to give him his due. The soldier still flashes his sword and the politician continues to pour words sweetened with flattering wantonness into the ears of man. But in the mighty round-up, a thousand years shall be but an unbranded maverick in the herd of the ages, and then the world shall read, in letters blazed from the sky, the record of its debt to the soul that once inhabited this bit of mold."

He looked about for his hat, found it lying on a wet stone, put it on his head and turned to the Widow as if for commendation or agreement. "Ah, hope I don't presume when I say that you must have heard what I said."

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"Yes, Colonel, and it was a good declamation; and I don't feel disposed to dispute a man's claim to greatness, standing as I am at his own grave, but from what I have read of Franklin, I don't think that he was born, reared, worked and died in such superlatives as your enthusiasm would have me believe. Wasn't Jefferson a great man?"

"I grant you, madam, but he was a close reader of Rousseau and seemed to have caught the expression if not the spirit of liberty from him."

"You can't deny to Washington——"

"Madam, I deny to him nothing, but his work could have been done by some one else."

She mused for a moment. "Lincoln," she said.

"The inspired man of a dark hour," the Colonel spoke. "His greatness was restricted within the shores of one nation. If the outer world acknowledges him at all, it is as of a man with a great heart. To the sympathetic heart the world sometimes pays the tribute of sympathy. Any other objections to offer?"

"No, I believe not," she answered, with a gesture of the hand, as if dismissing herself

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she were ready to go. She looked at him with a smile. "Shall I beg your pardon?"

"What for?"

"For taking issue with you."

"Margaret, when you give a man an opportunity to argue with a woman, you have conferred a favor upon him."

"But I don't care for your arguments. I would rather walk with you simply than to ride with you in your sky-wagon. The best I have ever liked you was in that little restaurant, just now."

"And the best I have ever liked you, Margaret, was when you took to your mother-heart that soiled bit of wayward man's experiment—that child. No ballroom queen was ever so beautiful."

"Oh," she laughed; "let us go back and I'll grab him again. But, Colonel, why did you give him so much money? Could you afford it?"

"It is a rare thing that the man who can afford does afford. But I could and I did. Doubtless a smaller amount would have served as well, but I felt that the contribution must be in gold and I had no suitable

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piece. I couldn't ask for change, you know. Well, we'll get a cab."

On the way back to New York he told her that he had written to Skidder, requesting him to call concerning the production of the play. She said that she wished that he would let her be partner in the venture. "No matter how much it may cost I'll willingly furnish half the money," she said.

"I wonder that you have any money at all," he replied. "Don't you know that on my part this play is simply a whim; and you must understand that a whim is always a poor investment."

"But whims are sometimes our greatest pleasures. A poem is sometimes nothing but a whim. Your man Franklin's catching of the lightning was nothing but a whim."

"Margaret, you are the only woman companion I have ever known."

"I think it's going to rain again," she said.

"Rain again just because you are my only woman companion?"

They laughed with so much more of a gurgle of sentiment than with a show of mirth that a mischief-loving newsboy brought for-

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ward a box of sweets, and was rewarded with a quick sale.

"You either give money or spend it all the time," she said, nibbling a bon-bon. "But tell me more about your play."

"Yes, speaking of giving money away. Well, it's heart and treachery; and it seems that if one doesn't catch 'em the other ought. Art, you know, is out of the question. Art makes its appearance as a determined revival. Trash is spontaneous, but the trash of one age may be the art of the age to follow. I wonder what Sammy and——"

"Imogene are doing?" she broke in. "Oh, chattering gravities."

"Yes, dignifying trifles."

"He seems to be a very sane young man," she said, shooting a sly glance at him, popping him with a whip lash from the corner of her eye.

"Who, that boy! Crazy as a jumping bean. An old fellow that used to keep a toll-gate out on the Bardstown pike——"

"Of course, he died many years ago, and if he did, we'll let him rest. We were talking about Sammy."

"Ah, but am I not to illustrate?"

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"No, not now."

"Then you would reduce me to a skeleton. Illustration illumines truth."

"Obscures it."

"All right. Then without illustration I'll say he's crazy."

"Over Imogene? I didn't think so."

"You knew it. She knew it. Both of you knew it as soon as he did."

She moved closer to him. "And wasn't it an agreeable discovery?"

"Don't know about that. If so, something must have made it agreeable. What was it?"

"Oh, perhaps a previous discovery—that she was crazy about him. She came home raving over him—saw him in a Mexican ball-room."

"Humph! Two wing-broken birds flopping in the air at once. He followed her to New York. And if both are crazy, it follows naturally that they must merge into one insanity. But will she marry a youth who has his fortune yet to make?"

"Imogene has character—an individuality that would scorn the selling of self. She is not handsome, but she is something more than handsome; she is a soul. If she loved a

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drayman she would marry him and take care of his horse. She could have married a titled foreigner; she could have lived in a worm-eaten mansion, and what could appeal more to a romantic girl? There is only one thing that I regret, concerning it all—I regret that he is not really your son."

He was holding her hand. Slowly she took it away. "No," she said. "No. I can't forget the other woman. And I ought this moment to despise myself, but somehow I can't. I have no right to be with you, no right to be happy with you, but never have I been so contented, so completely at rest as you have made me. But after to-day we must meet only as——"

"Enemies?" he said.

"Only as friends."

"But haven't we been meeting as friends?"

"At first we were acquaintances," she said. "You came with a sort of soft and mellow ripeness. You reminded me of a harvest apple. You told quaint stories. In your bow there was the gentlemanly past portrayed in pantomime." She hesitated. "And then—then you paid court to me, but now it seems that you have grown indifferent."

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He smiled at her and in his smile there was mischief. "Was I growing indifferent when I said something which you declared I must never repeat? Doesn't it seem that I have paid court in so far as you would permit me?"

Suddenly her manner, the expression of her countenance underwent one of those little indefinable changes which it would no doubt strain the minuteness of a camera to catch, but which means so much as almost to pull down or to reconstruct an entire nature. "Oh, but why should you, a married man, pay court to me? You must know that I could never permit such a thing. I hope you have not misunderstood my—kindness. As I said, you came with so simple, so delicious a nature, sparkling like the dew on the clover. But now it seems that you suppose me to expect—oh, to be paid court to. That was taking a low view of me, Colonel."

"Ah, madam, how you have misinterpreted me. Not for a moment have I thought of you as other than kind; and I knew that you couldn't possibly want me to pay court to you. But I am frank to say that if I——" he hesitated and eagerly she questioned him.

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"But if what, Colonel?" The train had stopped at a station and her voice was as soft as the dusk twitter of a summer bird.

"Madam, what I was going to say, perhaps would be better left unsaid."

"That would be taking an unfair advantage, Colonel; and surely you wouldn't seek the advantage over a friend."

"I am afraid that it might wound you."

"Wound me! Am I a peevish child to be treated as if I had no estimation and no thought?"

"Well—understand you urge me."

"Oh, no, I don't urge you."

"Then we'll leave it unsaid."

"And if I had urged you I don't suppose it would have made any difference. If it be something that I should not hear, why I'm sure I am quite capable of defending myself against it. But of course I shall not invite a tingling of the ears. Perhaps it was better that you didn't say it. Yes, and I thank you for keeping it back."

The train moved on. The lamps were lighted. A boy came through with the latest

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editions of the afternoon newspapers. The Colonel bought three or four. The Widow took up a pink sheet and sat looking out into the dark. Then she glanced at the headlines. The Colonel caught up a statistical editorial on immigration and became interested in it.

"It is pleasant to travel with one that reads all the time," she said.

"I beg your pardon, madam, but I thought you were reading."

"You gave me every inducement to read, I'm sure. Yes, even to the buying of newspapers and foisting them upon me. And I suppose that now every intention of telling me what you had intended to say and so ungraciously held back has passed out of your head. Has it?"

"May be I had dismissed it."

"And am I so easily dismissed, Colonel? Now, why don't you tell me?"

"I will. I was going to say that if ever I had met a woman who unconsciously on her part demanded that I should pay court to her, regardless of all existing and all pre-

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vious obligations, it was surely yourself. I was going to say that with the purest religion in my heart I could kneel to you and——”

“Some one is listening, I’m sure. No, you mustn’t talk that way. Oh, here we are at the ferry.”

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CHAPTER XVIII.

BROUGHT HIM A NOTE.

As they were crossing the black water he addressed her as madam and she seemed surprised. "I thought you were going to call me Margaret." He said that somehow his freedom with her was gone, since she had objected to it, and she declared that she had not objected. Silently they drove up town, and just before getting out at the hotel she said: "Oh, I forgot to tell you not to say anything to Sammy—not to let him know that Imogene thinks more of him than of a friend. Let him find it out for himself. It is always sweeter then. Let me thank you for a happy day. No, for a day when you have been kind enough to put up with me."

The Colonel went to Sammy's room. The young fellow was walking up and down, and seemed to be sick with a long period of trouble-bringing meditation. He shook hands with the Colonel as if many months had elapsed since their separation. During the day he had not seen much of Imogene, but

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he had seen enough to know firmly and finally what he had all along suspected, that she did not love him. He had never believed that she did. How could she, so graceful, so aspiring, such a thinker, such a soul? He had come to her as one of the many ordinary chaps, loving but incapable of making a living. This fact alone while materialistic and having naught to do with the soul, proved that he was not worthy of her, a man of no force, a failure. All of this was as preface to another edition of his desire to acquaint her with his prospects. But the Colonel shook his head.

"It is hardly worth while for me to repeat what I've said on the subject. But I will. If she's not willing, yes, anxious to take you whether or no, she's not worth having. Never let anything crowd that out of your mind."

"But see here, dad; isn't a girl to use any judgment at all? If not she might just as well accept one fellow as another."

"Then you think it ought to be a show-down of pocket-books, eh?"

"Oh, not that, dad; of course not that. But he ought to show in some way that he's

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worth something. You can't leave it to a fellow's own expression of what is in him—when he is almost stricken dumb. That's the reason the insincere duffer sometimes wins the finest woman. Insincerity is glib, while a genuine white heat of love often splutters. And like every other galoot of my class, the moment I'm away from her there wheels into action a machine gun, popping out words five hundred to the minute. Let's eat here, dad. I don't want to go down and run the risk of seeing her again to-day."

This met the Colonel's view, and they ordered dinner to be served in the room. The American was not disposed to talk, not even to tell a story; nothing reminded him of *Old So-and-so*, and Sammy remarked upon it.

"Hadrn't noticed that I was silent, my boy."

"Silence contemplates noises but not itself," said the youth.

"Eh, getting back among 'em—Lucullus and the rest. Didactic and in love. But if you've retained any scraps of learning, don't flash 'em in New York. They'll call you schoolmaster, and they have a contempt for

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the pedagogue. What's become of her brother?"

"Dick? Oh, he comes around once in a while. I don't think he likes me very much. To-day he took her off to one side and talked to her."

"Wanted to borrow money from her, I guess," said the Colonel.

"I wonder if that was it. She gave him something."

"That was it, I warrant you."

"Dad, you've got us all sized up pretty well."

"All but myself, and there I stall. Thought I had the Widow placed pretty well, but didn't. Gad, she's quirky, and part of the time to-day she made me as sad as—sad as low water."

"As low water! Is that sad?"

"If you'd ever been a steamboatman you'd think so. Reckon I was too open a book for her. She committed me to memory and now—now she can repeat me at her leisure."

The boy sat musing. In his mind there dwelled something that the girl had told him in confidence: "I don't know what is the trouble with Aunt Mag. And I'm going to

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say something I shouldn't say, for it's awful, but I believe that in spite of herself she is in love with the Colonel. Just think how desperate that would be—in love with a married man. But of course it will be impossible for him ever to discover it. Like the strong woman she is she'll hide it. And that is what real virtue means, suppression and renunciation."

The boy wanted to tell him as he sat there, pondering, doubtless thinking of her, but under the bond of confidence the youth was dumb.

Dinner was served. The Colonel had lighted his cigar and was meditatively smoking when there came a knock at the door. Sammy answered it. A page wanted to know if the Colonel were within. He had brought a note. The American took it, and though the handwriting was not familiar, his fingers trembled as he tore open the envelope. It was from the Widow, and thus the note ran in characters almost tumbling over one another in their haste:

"My Dear Chum:—I couldn't let the night pass into the darkness of all the other nights without a show of repentance on my

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part for my beastly humor to-day. I don't know why I was so inhuman as to cross you, the best friend I ever had, indeed, the only spiritual friend I have ever known. Have you looked out upon this night? The clouds are gone, like my mean humor, and the moon is shining, and the upper air is star-dusty as if some one were beating a carpet in the milky-way. How patient you were—how kind when I was at my worst. But one of these days I am going to put your good humor to the test; I am going to tell you something of my life and then you must despise me. How natural I feel to-night, and a woman is always weak when she is natural. But who ever loved a strong woman? Who is the author of this, or is it a proverb out of the anonymous fog of the ages: 'A man loves with his eyes and a woman with her ears.' Is that the reason why a beautiful young woman, an heiress, courted by sappy lords, fell in love with Old Sheridan, the pauper genius? Love! Indian philosophy called it wisdom. I wonder if it is. Whence comes it? And if it be of a sort forbidden of man, why should it not have been forbidden of God and not permitted to be born? However I do not write to philosophize but to ask pardon for my pettishness to-day. Can you recall the words you spoke at the grave of Franklin? I wish you would write

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them for me. Imogene is sad to-night. She has been convinced that Sammy does not love her. How blind some people are. I should like to tell her what you told me, that he is crazy over her, but must not. It would be a violation of your confidence. At this moment I suppose you are telling a story, having forgotten all about our little journey; and at this moment, too, there comes the strains of a waltz. I wonder if you hear it. Good night."

Carefully the Colonel put the paper into his pocket. Then he took it out, read it again and placed it in his pocket-book.

"Anything gone wrong?" Sammy inquired.

"Oh, no, everything's all right."

"From—er—"

"Yes."

"Oh, and she has written to say that Imogene doesn't want to see me again. Is that it?"

"Far from it."

"Are you sure, dad?"

"Well, I can read."

"What does she say? It must be something, for it hasn't been long since you saw

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her. It is something that has come up suddenly. Does she mention me at all?"

"Sammy, she's a most remarkable—I might say a most unexpected woman. Somehow we didn't get along very well coming back. I seemed to have lost out with her; I couldn't say anything to glamour her, so to speak. And she showed her impatience. Now she writes to show her repentance."

"Dad, she loves you. That's all there is to it."

"None of that, you rascal. Charming rascal, though, i'gad. But how can she when she thinks I'm married?"

"Dad, you're old fashioned."

"What, because I attribute to woman—"

"A lack of human nature," said the youth. "Woman's nature hasn't changed, but from what I can gather it was the fashion in the South for man gallantly to blind himself toward her human qualities and to open wide his eyes to angelic attributes. In matters of the heart he made her superhumanly strong. Do you suppose that when a man and a woman are constantly thrown together—when they are such companions as to forget sex—do you suppose the fact that one of them is

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married constantly lives in the mind of the other? Do you?"

"I don't suppose anything, Sammy. Two or three times to-day I began to suppose, and then found out I was wrong. But never in the South or elsewhere have I set up the divinely unnatural for woman. I have been too much of a rounder not to know something of life, and if I started out in the belief that woman was at all times an angel, the idea has at least been jostled a time or two."

He arose and, with his hands behind him, meditatively walked up and down the room. There came another knock at the door, and the page that had brought the note from the Widow, now brought a card from Joseph Aukwall Skidder.

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CHAPTER XIX.

UNDER WAY.

Mr. Skidder appeared, fur-shedding plug hat in hand, bowing in the door; and as an old acquaintance the Colonel seized him by the hand. "But we'd better go to my room," said the American. "The play is there. Come, both of you."

The drama was hauled out and the experienced Mr. Skidder shuddered at its bulk. He reached down and felt about his ankles to determine whether or not his faded yellow spats were buttoned, placed his black-thorn cane on the floor beside his chair, rolled his eyes in mute appeal at the Colonel and said that he was ready. He looked as if he had yielded to the final adjustment of the sheriff. Sammy stood with one arm resting on the low mantelpiece.

As the Colonel began to arrange the typewritten sheets he said that he was no reader. Mr. Skidder spoke in commendation of this apparent fault, saying that the qualities of a play should be bright enough to shine

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through the evils of bad declamation. The Colonel looked at him, smiled and gave him an approving nod. Then he began to speak of the conditions under which the play had been written; and in the gentlest manner Skidder gave him to understand that the public didn't give, "ah, a damn for conditions."

"I was giving them for your own information, sir," said the Colonel.

"Ah, yes, of course." He picked up his cane, stuck the head of it into his cheek, took it out, put the cane down and with his handkerchief dusted his spats. Sammy stood with his eyes half closed, like a colt dreaming in the sun.

"Understand," said the Colonel, "that I don't know how to pull the strings that fetch them on or off."

Skidder looked at him compassionately. How was it possible for him to know? Had it not taken Bartley Campbell and some of the rest of them nearly half a lifetime to understand?

"But," said the Colonel, "I am not too set in my ways to accept of advice. I've got it cut up into acts all right."

Skidder could not restrain the remark:

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"Yes, but that much was done toward dramatizing the New Testament; the acts of the Apostles, you know."

The Colonel laughed. "Well said, Davy, most excellent said; and you may now sow the headland with wheat—with red wheat, Davy."

Skidder looked at him with a comedy squint in the eye. "Good as a paraphrase but deplorable as a quotation. I beg your pardon if I interrupt."

"Oh, not at all. Well, I'll begin now."

He read the first act, or rather the first break-off; and the actor smiled approvingly, slowly nodding his apparently thoughtful head. Sammy continued to dream, his eyes half shut.

The second break-off was read. Skidder got up, shook down the legs of his trousers and resumed his seat. Sammy's eyes were closed. No one spoke, and after waiting for a few moments, the Colonel went on with his labor. And it was labor. On his brow stood beads of perspiration. It seemed that his mind had broken out in blisters. Another curtain. Skidder spoke approvingly. Sammy was gone. The end must come sometime,

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and it came. "Good," the actor cried. "I don't see why it shouldn't make a hit. The characters are true, the situ——"

"That's all very well," the Colonel broke in, "but tell me the truth, or rather what you conceive to be true. I mean business and didn't request you to call to flatter me. Do you think that the thing can be larrupped into shape?"

"Well, it would be almost like dramatizing a novel."

"Well, that has been done, hasn't it?"

"Oh, yes; but the trouble will be—well, in finding a manager, a producer, an angel, if I may employ a term familiar to the profession."

"Manager be blowed and angel be hanged. But I beg your pardon, for I haven't as yet made it clear to you what my intention is. I'm to be my own producer. I understand that Daly's can be rented; and I know that actors as well as other men can be hired."

Skidder sprang up with a clap of his hands. "By the Lord, you can hire me."

"All right, sit down. I want to engage you to play the part of the betrayed hero, and to act as stage manager. You are to get the

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company together, and sign agreements in my name, to pay good salaries. Your own salary—well, now, let's see. I don't know much about it, you understand. How would three hundred a week——"

At this moment Skidder no doubt performed his life's masterpiece of acting. His heart had jumped out, over the top of his head, but he caught it in the air, choked it into submission, and back into his tumultuous bosom he tossed it, smothered it. He thought that three hundred a week might do, as a starter. In his hey-day, at the time when he had cut freshest and dewiest grass, his salary had never kicked its heels above the fifty-a-week mark. Once with a road company playing the *Lady of Lyons* he had signed at one hundred, but not more than ten a week had ever been paid. And was he now to wade out, throat deep into such wealth?

"I haven't as yet settled on a title," said the Colonel. "It has seemed to me a pretty hard thing to get at."

The actor put his elbow upon the arm of the chair, gripped his brow and in this position pondered deeply. Finally he came out of his meditation and waved his hand as if

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flagging a train of thought. "I think I have it, sir," he said. "Call it Glick City. The name is of the town, and as apparently no mistake was made in naming plays after states, I shouldn't think it would be a risk to—I might say, to particularize with the name of a town."

The Colonel took up the first page of his manuscript and looked at it, as if he would imagine Glick City written at the top. "Perhaps we might as well settle on that name."

"And the name of the author is to be _____,"

"To you and the people of this hotel I am J. Boyers. Whether or not this is my real name makes no difference, since I run no bills and since I shall pay you weekly in advance, if you like."

Skidder hooted at the notion that it could make any difference, and especially with himself. But his breathing was noticeably easier after the mention of "advance."

"But," added the Colonel, "for reasons of my own I am going to have it printed on the bills 'By an American in New York.'"

"Capital," cried Skidder. "Great. And now do you want me to get some one to

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dramatize it for you, or shall I take a pull at it myself? I am not a stranger at the work. I have plucked many a tail feather out of plays flying past and have adorned many a gloomy scene with them."

"Well, you may take it and do the best you can, but there must be no theft. Use the material I give you, and if we fail, let us fail honestly. As soon as you get an act done, bring it to me. Ah, by the way, I think you'd better take up your quarters here, at the Waldorf, at my expense, of course, so as to be in immediate touch with me."

Skidder was staggered. "Ah," he said in a sad tone, "nothing could give me more pleasure, or indeed more standing, but the present state of my wardrobe——"

"Don't let that worry you. I'll give you a bonus of a couple of hundred—or rather an advance on your salary, not as actor but as playwright."

The actor could act no longer. He bounded across the floor and seized the Colonel's hand. "Ah, sir, you may not as you say know how to pull the string to fetch the characters on or off, but you know how to

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operate the golden cord to pull the long-sunken sun out of his bed."

"Sit down."

"I shall not sit down until I tell you or try to tell you what I think. You are a materialized generosity, come out of the spiritual world of art. You have no doubt been engaged in great enterprises and have made souls happy, but never a poor soul so happy as this one to-night. You first met me under most unfortunate circumstances, and that makes more wonderful the miracle of it all."

"Sit down, please."

"In a moment, sir. Whiskey is the feeder of two moods, despondency and elation, and as it has fed one, it shall not feed the other. Once more I must grasp your hand. I don't think that in the world there is much of gratitude, and especially does it seem rare among those connected with the stage, but if I haven't it, damned if I don't pray for it. That's all I have to say, and now for work."

He began to bundle up the manuscript. The Colonel gave him two one hundred dollar bank notes. He took them as if they were stage money, and with a flourish tucked

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them into a pocket of his "wescut;" and then, with the play under his arm, he backed out, bowing. The American stood beneath the chandelier. From his pocketbook he took two sheets of paper and stood there a long time, fondly gazing at them.

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CHAPTER XX.

THE PRESS AGENT.

While yet the Colonel stood there, gazing at the paper, he cried out: "Why, bless my life, this ought to be answered. What could I have been thinking about, talking to actors and scheming to bring out a play. Ought to be ashamed of myself to neglect so important a matter."

He sat down, opened his desk, drew out a block of paper and with a stub pen began almost furiously to write. But when with big characters he had covered a sheet he ripped it off, muttered, "won't do," and tore it into pieces. "Now, just what sort of a letter should a supposedly married man write to a woman who tries to pick a quarrel with him, repents most womanishly, and going into the sky for a figure, catches a star on the point of her pen and throws it at him! Propriety would seem cold. And yet, impropriety would mean insult. But why not write to her and tell her what a liar I have been—declare my love for her? And I do love her. Not

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with the wildness that I loved Mary, but it is just as deep, just as strong. It is romance not in the morning but at noon. What am I thinking about? She is simply playing with me. She wants to force from me some sort of declaration and then deliver a lecture on morality. I'll simply write her a humorous note. I shall be more guarded with her, and when the play has been brought out—when I find—find what? I guess I'm a little flurried. I'll go to bed and think it over. Sammy says she loves me. Does the young scoundrel think that such a thing could be possible under existing circumstances? What a fool position for a man to place himself in. Why did I take up such a whim in the first place? Because I wanted friendship and didn't want to run the risk of other entanglements. Nice mess I've made of it. I'll call on her as early to-morrow morning as seems proper and tell her—tell her what? That I have made arrangements to have my play brought out." He turned out the lights and sat in the dark, looking out upon the mottled night. It was time to go to bed, but he continued long to sit there, musing, wondering if he had not made a mistake in everything

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he had done since coming; wondering, indeed, if he had not made a mistake in coming. "I will sleep," he said, "and then I will write to her. Says she will tell me something to make me despise her. Hanged if women haven't done that very sort of thing. And that is the sort of thing they sometimes want to tell. A woman believes that some sort of confession is demanded of her. Well, I'm not demanding any confessions from this woman. Suppose she should demand them from me?"

In bed he lay a long time, carrying a thought up to the verge of a dream, stumbling and then back into wide wakefulness. And when daylight came it seemed to him that he had slept only in winks, but he felt fresh and his mind was clear for the writing of the letter. At ten o'clock he was still at the work, trying to get at what he wanted to say and then laboriously copying what he had not said to suit himself. There came a noise at the door, intended to be a knock but which sounded as if some one had sighed his way to the threshold and then thumped in a sort of despair with a help-begging palm. "Take off your boxing gloves, knock with

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your knuckles and come in," called out the Colonel, knowing that it was Sammy; and it was. He came in and the fancy that he had sighed his way to the door was not far from the truth. He looked as if he had been seized by the old washerwoman Fate and run through the wringer of distress.

"Gone," he gasped, dropping into a chair.

"Well, hanged if you don't look it."

"I mean they are—she is."

The Colonel arose and went toward him.

"Eh? Now tell me what you do mean. Who's gone?"

"They are—Imogene. They went just now, and with no word except one or two that I could scarcely understand. I was in the corridor waiting to catch the earliest possible glimpse of her, and I saw the porters bringing the trunks out; and then they came bundled up, and her face looked as if she had been crying. I asked the meaning of it all, and Imogene halted to tell me, but her Aunt bade her come on. I followed along and learned that they were going up into Connecticut to be gone the Lord only knows how long. She said that she would write—begged me not to follow, and looked at me

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with such appeal that my legs seemed to give way under me and there I was, leaning against the wall and they were gone. As soon as I could I ran down and asked the clerk if any address had been left and he said that there had not. I asked him if he had any idea, and he smiled like a frost crack in a pumpkin. I knew that letter you had last night contained something, and it was cruel not to tell me, dad."

"Yes," said the Colonel, stepping back, taking up the sheets upon which he had written and beginning to tear them to pieces. "Something, but written in confidence and I couldn't tell you. But there was in the note no threat of this run-away, and my word for it, nothing to give rise to the suspicion that the girl is not as insane about you as you are about her. So, don't let that part worry you. The fact is, the Widow has gone to punish me."

"But why does she want to punish you? What have you done, except to treat her kindly—I mean to show her——"

"That's just it, my boy. I'm afraid I did show her."

"Show her what?"

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"Well, must have angered her by showing that I was in love with her."

"Dad, you make me tired. That's exactly what you didn't show her and it is what she looked for. Now, don't fly off into virtue and morality. A woman's a woman, and that's all there is to it. Suppose you are married? Yes, but isn't there such a thing as divorce, and wouldn't she marry you if she thought you divorced, yes, and on her account? It is a proof of a woman's strength if she can bring about a divorce, and she loses sight of the weakness on the part of the man."

"Oh," said the Colonel, "I had forgotten you were educated in Chicago. But go ahead, sage—destined to be bald before gray. But I want to tell you: It is singular that you are old enough to understand my case and yet so young that your own is a mystery to you. Are widows the only open-face time keepers of society? For my part I'm glad they are gone."

"Dad!"

"That's what I said. It will give me a chance to get my play in shape, while if she were here I should neglect everything for

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her. You'll hear from the girl. Don't worry about that."

He pretended not to be worried, but he was—not so much because the woman was gone, but because he could not get rid of the thought that he had in some way acted the fool. Sammy went out, into mourning, and was not seen again during the day. At two o'clock in the afternoon Skidder made his appearance, in new black with a flowered "vest," and with a plug hat that mirrored his surroundings. His thorn-stick, companion and sign of profitless wanderings up and down the actor market-place, had been supplanted by a slight cane, gold-headed and silver shod; he was shaved and rosy with prospects, having been bathed in the sunshine of promise. Within half an hour he was at work, bell-boys flying about him, and the Colonel, walking up and down the room, marveled at his dexterity, wondering why he had not always found employment. In dramatic work one swift judgment is worth a world of detail. A thousand words put into a look, ten pages into a gesture—a volume into a situation, mean success. The superfine literary touch is nearly always fatal. The old

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dramatists spoke, but they talked in pictures, painted scenery at a time when there was no overalled artist with a bucket; they thundered, and literature that seeks to follow them can only echo.

Skidder had not the failing of a literary touch. But he knew the value of a poetic thought expressed in action. And swift action expressed his own performance, for by midnight the first act was as nearly completed as it could well be made without the test of rehearsal. The Colonel listened to the reading, sometimes with an expression of pain, for he saw many of his fancies fall like birds shot dead in the air. He begged almost piteously for one of his long speeches, but the dramatist shook his head, and remarked: "The reason I've been so poor an actor is perhaps because I've been so good a playwright." This was in one way encouraging but alarming in another, for the play must be acted as well as written. The Colonel said that he hoped—and Skidder shut him off with the assurance that he had nothing to fear. On the day following the work was slower, not because ambition was less but because capacity had been strained. The Col-

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onel had learned something and now in his own room he worked on the third act, believing that in cutting out everything he could make no mistake, but Skidder showed him that he had simply shortened without having embodied. The American swore that the devilish thing was too elusive for him, and after a long and finally successful search for his hat he went out for a walk in the park. In the air was the first suggestion of the coming spring. No bud had begun to swell and there was no peep of green; but the atmosphere was soft and from the ground toward the top of a tree an oriole flew, streaming a string from his beak. The Colonel was sitting on a bench where the sunlight fell, when Sammy came up, and as such a meeting in New York is ever regarded as a coincidence, they shook hands and asked after each other's health, though they had breakfasted together.

"I have heard from her," said Sammy.

"Good. Or is it good?"

"Well, it could be worse. She sent me a poem."

"One of her own, and yet could be worse?"

"Now, dad, none of that. But she's devilish stingy of her words. Only five pages.

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I could have written a hundred if I had picked up and left her that way. Just a friendly sort of letter with——”

“With a sly whimper here and there,” said the Colonel.

“With a sigh, dad.”

“Well, what more do you want? More sighs? What does she say?”

“Oh, she and her aunt are at their country home near New Haven, she doesn’t say exactly where it is. It seems that the old lady ——”

The Colonel fumed. “Old lady, now be careful, sir. There’s not five years difference in their ages. They might well pass for sisters—if the girl were handsomer, sir.”

“Beg your pardon, dad. No, it’s a fact, there isn’t so much difference in their ages. And I’m willing to grant that the Widow is handsomer.”

“All right. When are they coming back?”

“I don’t know—she didn’t know.”

“Well, when you write tell her that the play is getting along first-rate, and that I shall expect them both on the opening night. Did I tell you that the theatre has been grabbed up by my agent? It has. The price is pretty

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steep, but that makes no difference. Skidder's man is getting the company together and it won't be long before we begin rehearsing. I have hired a quick-stepping fellow as a press agent—knows all the newspaper men, especially the big ones, eats with Hearst and Pulitzer every day or so, and of course their columns are gaping for him. He needed a spring overcoat, going out to lunch with Bennett, I guess, and I put up for him. I don't know whether it's Bennett's custom to eat in his overcoat or not, but may be it is. Hasn't had anything printed yet; says he's waiting for a big spread on Sunday. Well, he's a liar at any rate, and that may help some." For a time he sat in serious thought. "Now why did she want to pick up that girl and take her away, just at this time? Ah, women pull down one another with their whims. Shall we stroll on back toward the hotel?"

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CHAPTER XXI.

MISS BAITH.

Sammy had tried hard to sit by and to take note of progress on the dramatization of the Colonel's romance, but the strain was too much for his "low" state of health. "Don't try to be interested in it," said the Colonel. "Wander off somewhere and be wretched to the full craving of your trouble-hunting heart. If all other resources fail, I'll get you a hand organ charged with love-sighs set to doleful tune and let you grind them out to swell the volume of the east wind."

"Dad," said the youth, with a fall-of-the-year expression of eye and countenance, "I wouldn't make fun of you."

"I wish you would, for then I might join in with you. But don't let anything rope your mind and haul it away from the fact that I'm a fool. At present the prospect of bringing out the play is a brace, but when that is all over with and I fall back on myself, I'll fall hard."

"A rich man may play the fool for his

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own amusement," replied Sammy. "He can always lift himself out of a difficulty with contemplating the fact that he *is* rich. Especially is this true of men who have been poor and then become rich, either by luck or skill. If you play the fool you can do it picturesquely. I can't. I'm too modern; I'm supposed to look business whether I am or not. As soon as you are tired of going in one direction with the Widow, you can turn about, taking her with you, and go in a direction opposite, or tack, or do as you please. I'm not my own sailor; I don't know how to manage my boat, and I drift about at the pleasure of the wind. My education has been practical, but I fall short of its aims. I—I don't know what I am, and I'm becoming so accustomed to my own whine that I expect it of myself. Why the deuce doesn't she invite me to visit her? Why in thunder doesn't she tell me where she is? Dad, the whole thing is this: The Widow wants to punish herself by staying away from you, and it makes no difference to her how many others may suffer in consequence."

An hour later while the Colonel was sitting in his room, with the last act of Glick

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City before him, but with the picture of a woman in his mind, Sammy came bursting in. "Oh, it's all right," he cried, violently shaking his fist, a piece of paper crumpled into it; "all right, and now I can draw a breath as long as a suspension bridge. I have a bid to call—see here?" He opened his hand, tenderly took the piece of paper and affectionately began to smooth it out. "Short, doesn't say much, but says all. Would be so much pleased to see me. Isn't that pretty strong, dad?"

"Yes, oh, yes; couldn't have made it any stronger unless she had said, 'if you happen to find yourself down our way, drop in.' That's all right, Sam." He had caught the youth's quick fall of countenance. "Of course she wants to see you. Of course you'll go, and of course you'll come away engaged to her. Do I think so? I know it. Cut and dried from the first, plain as could be, no other possible outcome."

"How are you getting along with the play?"

"Oh, did you know we had a play on hand? Keen observation. Perhaps you saw something about it in the Sunday papers.

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There was a line or two about it. My press agent managed to get in a squib. He says the papers want stories. He can use columns of stories. Hearst and Pulitzer told him to bring them all the stories he could dig up. He couldn't dig up any. He wanted me to dig, and I dug. The stories were printed all right enough, except they failed to include any mention of the play. But we are getting along very well. Skidder is a wheel horse, and if the thing isn't a go, it won't be his fault. My vanity won't be hurt much, you know, even if the thing should be a failure. I haven't shoved my name forward, and suffering in disguise is only half suffering. I knew an old fellow down near Hopkinsville who, having taken the pledge at home, went over to a strange town, registered under an assumed name and got on a spree. Getting over it he was desperately sick, but he laughed to think that no one knew who he was and thus his distress was cut down considerably. The fact is I'm thinking more of that woman than of the play. Since she's gone I've found that the spell she put on me is stronger than I had thought possible. In a way, though, it tickles me."

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Sammy laughed, a melancholy sort of coo. "Of course it does since you know where you stand, but if it were all speculation as in my case you'd be just as I am, in the air."

The Colonel shook his head. "No, you haven't struck it. It has proved to me that my heart is wholly alive—and I thought it could never live again. You wouldn't think it untrue to Mary Barksdale—to you, Sammy, if I should say that in a somewhat different, a less tremulous manner, I love this woman just as fondly as—as——"

Now the boy laughed genuinely and with a loud roar. "Untrue to either of us? Dad, what a scarecrow to the blues you are. Why, it would delight me to know that you loved some one even more. But somehow I doubt it. I don't believe there's but one grand passion."

"Ha, now we stand on bricks baked in the ancient sun. Now we go back to the arguments of pre-historic hearts. There is but one youth, that is true; but all love if it is to endure, no matter how wild and passionate, must settle into quiet companionship. Forty-five isn't old, but the man who at that age loves impetuously is more to be pitied

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than congratulated. It is the fermenting of new wine in an old bottle. Glorious is the youth who loves too well; happy the old man who loves wisely."

"But do you love wisely when the object of your affections thinks you are married?"

"Wisdom is never complete. Vanity or some sort of trickery puts an alloy into it. But this deception on my part has brought out the sweetest companionship, the most unselfish generosity on her part, and over it I gloat fondly and congratulate myself. When are you going to start for—the infected district?"

"Within an hour. I'll write to you and you can apprise me of the date set for your first performance."

"All right, go ahead."

After shaking hands and looking glow-eyed at the Colonel, the young fellow took his leave, and the American went back into his engaging worry over the play. Now that he was the controlling force of a theatre, with a play of his own to be presented for the first time, he did not feel so much as if he were in a foreign land; and in the evening, in the mellowness of the twilight, he

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walked down past his possessions. Some of his actors were in front, and he greeted them as members of his family. He hoped that the ladies were well, and a fat fellow to play miner in a red shirt and boots as resplendent as the sun, said that he had just left Miss Baith, the leading lady, and that she was not only well but enthusiastic. As she had been engaged only that morning the Colonel had not seen her; he had given Skidder full swing and was not to question his judgment, but he felt that he should like to meet his star and he wondered when it would be convenient for him to pay her a call. The miner said that it was a matter of immediate possibility if not certainty. She was in a little hotel not far off. He would lead the way. The hotel was nearer than the Colonel had ventured to hope. In the past it had housed many a member of the profession. It was old, dingy, ill-smelling; there was no elevator, and Miss Baith's apartments were on the third floor. There was no formality of card; they climbed up and knocked on her door. A dog barked. The door was opened a few inches and a black eye surveyed the narrow hall. The miner spoke and the door

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was opened. The Colonel, when presented, bowed low. Miss Baith acknowledged the courtesy, backed into the room, threw a corset behind a trunk and bade the Colonel sit down. The dog barked furiously. She did not appear to hear him. The Colonel said that he had called—and before he could complete the sentence Miss Baith broke in with the assurance that she was pleased to see him. Then she added, speaking to the miner: "Sit over on the trunk, Ed."

The apartments consisted of one small room. The walls were smoky and scratched with matches. The carpet was old. One corner of the dresser rested on the handle of a hair-brush. The Colonel didn't know what to talk about so he inquired if she were well. She had never been better. "At any rate," he mused, "you are not fat." That was something. She didn't look like Mary Barksdale, but she was rather handsome. That was something more. The dog left off barking and began to play with the stub of a cigarette.

"Dog smoke?" the Colonel asked, and Miss Baith laughed, showing good dental

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work. "We are all so hopeful for the success of your play," she said.

"Oh, it won't really make much difference. It will run along for a time any way."

This was something new. Never before had she heard an author talk in that strain. "But success means so much," she said.

"Yes, when mere money is the object."

"Oh," she laughed, "but in this case it's glory. Well, it means a great deal there, just the same."

The Colonel acknowledged that without success there couldn't be very much of glory, but he did not expect that sort of achievement. He wanted simply to see the play performed, and if it were done well, his reward was sure. The parts had not been given out and she could not tell him that she was delighted with his work, but from what she knew of him, from what she saw of him at that moment, why, she didn't fear a failure. He thanked her and wished inwardly that she were a little younger. He asked her if she had ever played East Lynne. She couldn't remember. Perhaps she had, but she knew that she had played one of the two Orphans.

"They were blind, I believe," said he.

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"In that event you could not have made full use of those marvelous eyes."

She warmed toward him. She went so far as to request the dog to be good; and when the Colonel arose to go, she put out her hand and declared that she had enjoyed his visit so much. When they were clear of the house the Colonel expected that the miner would ask him what he thought of her, but he didn't; he spoke of the prospects of an early spring, and hoped that it might not be so pronounced in its keeping of promises as to send people into the parks at night.

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CHAPTER XXII.

NOT A WORD ABOUT HER.

When the Colonel entered the corridor of the hotel, a young man came swiftly forward to meet him, and not until after the shaking of hands and the exchange of many words did he recognize Dick Johnson, the brother of Imogene. He understood that the Colonel was to have a play and wanted to congratulate him in advance. "Yes," said the American, "I've just come from a visit to my leading lady, sir."

"Good. And I wish to repeat my congratulations."

"May be too early. Have you been in town all the time?"

"Yes, and—er—I'm most unfortunately situated to-night. My aunt as you know is not in town, and a sudden emergency makes it necessary for me to borrow some money—small sum for a few days."

The Colonel looked at him and smiled. "What's the limit?"

"I beg pardon, I didn't——"

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"Didn't pull out. Poker money, you know, is a great emergency. Is that it?"

"Well, the fact is that a party of us——"

"Yes, I understand, and I don't want to deliver a lecture, but, my boy, you'd better let it alone."

"I am going to quit after to-night; but the fever is on me now; was frozen out, and if you've ever played you know what that is."

"Yes, I know. But of all games in the world it is the worst because it is the most fascinating. And unless a man can get the poker microbe out of his blood, there is no hope for him in business. It's a fact. In order to succeed in any business you must give your mind to it—your best thought; but if you are a poker player you can't do that. How much do you want?"

"If you can let me have fifty, I can in a few days——"

"Don't make any promises. Here you are, and do the best you can."

Johnson thanked him and almost ran away, fearing that the game might be broken up, but more than likely they were waiting for him. They nearly always are.

Skidder was in the cafe, and he looked

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tired when the Colonel drew up a chair to join him. He said that the parts were being copied and would be ready on the following day. The Colonel told him that he had called on Miss Baith. Skidder wanted to know if he didn't think that she was a "peach." The Colonel said that he was not enough of a horticulturist to classify her. Skidder shook his head and remarked that she was a devil to get along with but that she could act. Perhaps that was the reason why she could act.

"Have you ever acted with her?" the Colonel inquired, and Skidder broke bread before answering. "Well, yes, think I have, in scenes a trifle more realistic than she is likely to give us in Glick City. She used to be my wife."

"What!"

"Yes, but that was several seasons ago, and it needn't worry you any. The judge was kind to both of us and granted a divorce. I thought she ought to pay me alimony, but there was a difference of opinion. She married a fellow that she was desperately in love with at the time, but I understand that they've passed each other up. Haven't

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asked her about him lately, as I am inclined to be gentle in such matters."

"But, sir, won't it be rather embarrassing to play with your former wife?"

"Oh, not at all. She understands."

"Yes, but the public!"

"Has forgotten all about both of us."

"But all the same I should think it a rather bad state of affairs."

"Oh, well, not if every one's satisfied. In artistic life we ought to forget little domestic foibles. In casting about for the proper one to play the part I thought of Miss Baith, dropped her a note, met her for the first time in a year or so and engaged her; and you'll have no cause to regret my selection. Wonderful nerve; fine emotion; sympathetic voice—charming woman. What are you going to order? I'd advise one of these English mutton chops—excellent. Little addicted to liquor at one time, during her trouble, but as that is past, we have nothing to fear."

"Do you think that fat fellow's all right for Jim Stokes, the miner?"

"Who, Hather? Capital; would have done heavy for Otis Skinner one season, but
——"

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"He's fat enough for a part as heavy as Falstaff."

"Yes, and he's versatile—has taken a whirl at opera; was tenor once for Emma Abbott. Don't think we'd better run out into the country and try it on the dog, do you?"

"No, we'll try it on the poodle right here."

The Colonel ordered a mutton chop, but told the waiter to see that it was American. Skidder remarked that the word English meant manner rather than substance. "All right," replied the Colonel, "let me have American manner." After a short silence the author of Glick City said that he had been thinking of the peculiar state of morals on the stage. Skidder looked surprised. In this respect he did not know that the stage was so very different from other professions, not so bad as the office building, and not much worse than the pulpit. Some of the women on the stage were just as true wives and just as devoted mothers as any women in the world could be. Some of them had divorces. So did the Vanderbilts. Some of them associated professionally with former husbands; and some of the women of society

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re-married their former husbands. If association with man were bad, why then the churches ought to separate the sexes. There was nothing about the stage to demand that virtue must be surrendered. Actors and actresses were more or less familiar, a family; but that should not lead to evil. The Colonel said that it was not his business to elevate the stage. He had simply rented one and took it as he found it, with splintered floor and in need of sweeping. Skidder thought that this was good and laughed at it.

After dinner work was resumed in Skidder's room. On the part of the actor-dramatist there was no disposition to shirk even the most minute or laborious detail. It was after midnight when they parted. The next day was to witness the beginning of rehearsals, to see what would come forth, the unexpected kinks, supposed action turned to halts, bright lines blurred, obscurities made strangely clear; but when the Colonel went to his room he thought not of the play but of the Widow. He conceived a plan of writing to her, and with his stub pen he covered many sheets of paper and then read the product aloud, but the message was too much

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like a memorial and he destroyed it. Then he took from his pocket a note which he had received that day from a detective and read it. Sim Groggin, the man upon whom it was his prayer that he might feast the eyes of never dying hate, had been lately seen in New York and was no doubt still in the city. Perhaps the name of the play would attract him to the theatre. The Colonel desired that he above all others should see the performance, the outward expression of a long-hidden vengeance. In the play the villain is not forgiven. He is not permitted to shoot himself, but about his neck a rope is tied and he is led up the trail, toward the camp higher among the mountains. Suddenly he breaks away, and with his hands tied behind him and with the rope trailing behind, he struggles to escape. Naturally he does not want to be hanged; he would much rather be shot. But the men refuse to shoot. They let him run. He comes to the edge of a precipice—leaps, and the rope catches and hangs him. The men stand looking at his struggles. Slowly he is strangling. Down below there is a den of wolves. They see the wretch suspended far above them and

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begin to howl for him. He ceases to struggle. The men shoot the rope in two and down he falls, into the jaws of the wolves. The Colonel had inquired of Skidder if he did not regard that scene as one of the most dramatic in the history of the modern drama, and the actor answered that it was at least one of the most fatal.

"Sim Groggin, should he be present, must recognize himself in the villain. Will fate—God, be kind enough to send him to the theatre?" the Colonel mused.

Rehearsal was called early, for nine o'clock, and not even was the leading lady late. She shook hands with the Colonel, nodded blythely to Skidder and then looked about for the dog. The Colonel expected that at once he was to be placed on a vantage ground when he could command a full and altogether a new view of his play, but there was nothing to see except actors and actresses looking over bits of paper, and nothing to hear except an occasional hand clap, on the part of Skidder, to attract attention,—an occasional mumbling, here, there, off in a corner,—the first sign that the play was to be acted. How much alive a

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sketch may be as literature and yet how dead as a dramatic possibility! Literature is permitted to dream; in a paragraph there may be a restful vision, a borderless landscape. But the drama, even in its apparent restfulness, must walk. It must jump to show how still it can be.

The Colonel did not remain long at the threshold of the initial rehearsal. He went out of the theatre, into the raw salt air of a spring that had suddenly turned to look backward, forgot the play, held to his heart a vision of the Widow and slowly wandered back to the hotel. In the corridor a young man spoke to him. "You don't remember me," and the American said that he did not. "I am the waiter that told you his little boy was sick."

"Oh, yes, yes. How are you? And the little fellow, I hope——"

"He's all right, I thank you, sir. I didn't suppose you'd know me. I'm not working to-day, and I've noticed that when a waiter gets off his rig and into the clothes common to other men, it is almost impossible to recognize him."

"Yes, I suppose so. And the little fellow

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is all right. Don't forget to carry out the other part of the agreement, that is, to have the bills sent to me."

"The bill didn't amount to anything, and it's paid. I have wondered, sir, if I couldn't do better in the West than here. I am a man of some education, but here I have no show at all."

"Why don't you try the Puget Sound country? There is the coming empire. Go out there and after a while build you a hotel. Whenever you decide to go West, let me know and I may have an opportunity to help you."

The Colonel expected that this was to end the conversation, but the young man showed a disposition to say more. The Colonel waited. "I hear you are about to bring out a play."

"Yes, we are rolling one up the skids."

"Saw something about it in the paper."

"That so? Your microscope must be a little stronger than mine."

"And I was thinking," said the young man, moving uneasily and looking down, "that you might give me a chance."

"Have you ever been on the stage?"

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"No, sir, but I know a good deal about it, in one way and another; have waited on a great many actors and have heard them talk."

"Yes, but unless you want a divorce from your wife, let the stage alone. Don't run the risk of even writing a play. Well, I must be moving on. Let me know about the time you are ready to start West."

In the full belief that his warning against the stage had robbed some divorce court lawyer of an ultimate client, the Colonel strode slowly to the office, to get his mail, and among the letters was one from Sammy. Passing all other matters, he broke the seal of the youth's message, sat down and read these lines:

"We are engaged. She accepted me in the belief that I am without money. Isn't that a beautiful self-sacrifice? The man and the heartless newspaper writer that constantly jibes at woman for her frailty and especially her alleged disposition to be mercenary ought to be scourged out of this country. Unless we look into the temple how do we know anything of the beauties within? Unless we can go into the room how are we to know anything about the soft glow of the lamp, filled with perfumed oil? I have looked into

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the temple; I have sat in the glow of the lamp, and I know that Imogene is a goddess. Brave! She wasn't at all excited or frightened when I asked her to be mine. We were walking along the country road and halted beneath a tree, to look upward at its fleshless fingers between us and the cool moon. All day I had been striving for the promontory of boldness, and finally I landed there with courage beneath the tree. Gilded moon-dust seemed to fall out of her hair. And before I knew it her head was on my shoulder and my words came like hastening driftwood on the tide of a mill-dam broken loose. But you know how it was. I don't believe in long engagements, neither does she, and our affairs will be settled in pretty short order, I tell you. She says that she would marry me if I were a digger of ditches. Could there be anything more noble than that? She is willing to live anywhere, to do anything for my advancement. Her brother Dick has just written to her, telling her that he has a fine place to put what little money she has, only a few hundred, I suppose; but I told her to consult you before making investments. She says that Dick is a fine business man, only he hasn't as yet had a chance. Don't forget to tell me of the date set for your first performance. Imogene, who knows a great deal about plays, thinks that yours will sure-

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ly be a success. I suppose the rehearsals are going on all right. I may draw on you soon."

The Colonel sat for a long time, musing; and the summing up of his conclusions was: "The puppy didn't say a word about *her*."

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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE COMING OF THE HOUR.

As the days passed, the author of Glick City was impressed with the semblance of dramatic form emerging from the chaos of mutterings. Nearly every one was letter perfect, and now the effort was not only to suit the action, but to mingle the action with the word. With the manner in which Skidder threw himself into the atmosphere and caught the spirit of the hero, the Colonel was delighted. "I'gad, sir," he said, "you spoke that just as if you thought it was a fact and would knock a man down for insinuating that it was a lie." He soon discovered that no mistake was made when to Miss Baith was assigned a vital part. She was tender and sympathetic; her voice was so sweet that he wondered how it ever could have served as vehicle for a cross word. With the miner he would have been better pleased if excessive flesh had not impelled on his part such wheezings and wobblings. Of course a man could be burdened with flesh, at first, but

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not for long, in the mountains, where double chins fade away like spring snowdrifts among the foot-hills.

Work on the scenery progressed with astonishing rapidity. It required but a souse and a jerk to slap upon canvas a towering rock, brown and seamed with age. To kick a bucket of white paint off the ladder was a snow-covered peak. It appeared to the man who was paying for it all that the painters were hastening through the job, but when a scene as a whole had been viewed from the front, he swore that Doré could not have done better, and there are critics who are no doubt willing to share his opinion.

A pretty slip of a girl whose duty in the play it was to carry a message to the mines and to come near offering a meal to a grizzly bear, inquired of the Colonel if he were not horribly afraid of the opening night. He felt disposed to give to her a piece of money and to tell her to run along now, but he answered that he had not thought of being frightened, "for the reason that there is no especial cause," he laughingly added. "I understand that the people of this town don't make a practice of toting guns." She smiled

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up at him and he smiled down at her. "Is this to be your first appearance on the stage, little one?" he inquired.

"Oh, no. I was, you might say, born on the stage and so was my daughter."

"Your daughter!"

"Yes, she was out with Julia Marlowe this last season."

"You don't tell me. Er—not as the nurse in Romeo and Juliet, I hope. Huh, you folks are a strange lot. Your husband living—Miss?"

"Which one?"

"Oh, any of them; it makes no particular difference."

"Mr. Mecklin is living—my late husband."

"Oh, late husband is living. Good enough. Is he on the stage?"

"Well, not actively at present; but last season he was bones in a minstrel company, quite active, too, for his age. He has laid away many a one of his co-workers."

"Yes, laying bones with bones. How do you like your part in this play?"

"Oh, it's only a bit, you know," she an-

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swered, smiling rather sadly, for all bits, no matter how lively, are melancholy.

"A bit, eh? Well, we can have you caught by the grizzly and make it a bite." And he walked away, musing: "Her daughter. I'll swear to the Lord they beat anything I ever saw."

Such progress was made, the most of the company being eager after a long season of enforced rest, that the date for the opening was set for the 26th of April, at least two weeks earlier than at first might have been thought possible. The press agent wanted a photograph of the Colonel, to print along with a story, but this the American refused. "For reasons of my own," said he, "there must be no picture of me. Now, don't insist; it must not be—no picture."

"I can get in pictures of the most of the company and——"

"Then put them in; I must be left out, and if any of these drawers for comic almanacs try to sketch me, they shall be held responsible, not in a court, sir, but to me personally."

The Colonel's hotel acquaintances, the Doctor and the Judge, pressed their congratulations upon him; they knew that his

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play would be a go; they accepted tickets and went away, sneering at his presumption. Every first play, every first book, every first anything is a secret affront to those who have not tried, and a deadly insult to those who have failed. Let him fail and be humble. In the eye the joyous light of success may at first be kindly, but soon it becomes a cold stare. Let us do all we can to prevent achievement, and if our efforts fail, why then we may turn with the applauding tide.

From Sammy there came another letter in answer to the Colonel's message of congratulation. "Everything here is as lovely as heart could wish," he wrote. "The weather is perfect, so far as I am able to judge. You scored me for not having mentioned Aunt Mag. I deserved it, for she is the best—well, one of the best women that ever lived. There is no end to her kindness. The people who live in the neighborhood of her country home all love her; and the village storekeepers clap their hands when they know she is coming, for it means the buying of things for the poor. Since I came she has clothed a score of needy children. But to a marked degree she has lost the bright gayety of manner which they

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say was once so pronounced a feature of her nature. All day and sometimes until late at night she sits by the window, looking out upon the water, dreaming. I won't flatter you by saying that she must be dreaming of you, dad. Perhaps not, for she rarely speaks of you. Yesterday she indulged in a bit of drollery, and for the first time within several days. A woman visitor made use of that old saw, 'as good fish in the sea as were ever caught,' and Aunt Mag replied that it might be true, but that the bait was not so good now as formerly. Was that bright? I'm such a fool now that I couldn't pass on anything. We'll be down for the opening—sure. Aunt Mag says that we'll go straight from the train to the theater and not worry you with our company at the time of your sore distress. Then we'll go somewhere to dinner. It seems to me that you must be going to meet Imogene for the first time. There never was a more affectionate girl—but I'm constantly startled, not to say just a little frightened, at her wisdom. She can repeat page after page from Tennyson's *Princess*. Dick has just left us. Having invested in some sort of company, he is very busy of late. He's a fine chap, dad, and

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I was glad to let him have fifty dollars to help him out of a temporary tight place. When I think of how much I have to be thankful for I'm almost afraid that it is all a dream. But you're no dream, dad, and the Lord knows I'm thankful for you."

One evening the Colonel left the theater with these words of Skidder's rumbling in his ears: "Ladies and gentlemen, we have done all we can possibly do until to-morrow night. It is now up to each one of us individually."

Until this evening the opening night had been to the actors a sort of speculative vision, hanging mist-like in the future, perhaps not to be materialized, but now it was a fact, a responsibility to be faced; and no actor is so hardened as not to feel the tremulous heaviness of a first night. He may be a child in a playhouse; he may be whimsical, fretful, peevish; but in his work no moralist could be more conscientious.

In the matter of paper as in every other line, no expense had been spared, and the town was extensively billed with the return of "New York's old favorite, Mr. Joseph Aukwell Skidder, fresh from new achievements abroad." It was rather late in the sea-

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son, but with liberal "papering" by the press agent the Colonel was assured of a large if not an enthusiastic audience. But he began to grow just a little nervous. Nervousness was in the atmosphere of the stage and he had breathed his part of it.

The day broke rainy, but along toward noon the sun shot its arrows through the leaden shield. This was a good omen, and besides, the author, looking over his right shoulder, observed a growing moon. In the corridor a bell boy asked him if he were going to open a show.

"Yes, my son, to-night."

"Is it a Buffalo Bill show, sir?"

The Colonel glowered at him. "No, an exhibition of health foods."

A chambermaid, overhearing him, said that she would like to go and take her sister, who was a cook. The author went to his room and sat down to look up the work of his press agent, in the afternoon papers. There was a picture of Skidder, leaning against an indistinguishable something, one of his foreign achievements, perhaps, together with a striking bit of art portraying Miss Baith on horseback. A paragraph offered the information

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that some of the lines were bright and many of the situations thrilling. He went out to dinner, but with him the author took no appetite, and after a cup of coffee, he strolled out to cool his brow with the gusty breath of the night. He met Dick Johnson, and he wondered why the man always seemed to him but little more than a shadow. "Ah, this is the night," said Dick. "My sister, my aunt and your son will be down, I understand."

"Yes, I'm afraid so."

"Afraid so?"

"That's what I mean. The fewer of my friends present the better. I didn't believe that it could get in on my nerves, but it has. Now a man can have a book brought out and snort in secret, but with this sort of thing he's hung up to full view. How are you getting along with your—your investments?"

"Investments? Oh, poker? I've passed it up. It's just as you said. There's no possible chance for a man. Do you know what train they are coming on? I'd like to see my aunt for a few moments before the play begins. Sorry I can't be there, but I've got an engagement."

"Same limit?"

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"Oh, it's not that, Colonel; I assure you it is not that. Let me see. I owe you fifty, don't I?"

"Yes, and I'll make it seventy-five if you'll keep your engagement and stay away from the play."

"Why—er—I don't like to be bought up in that way, Colonel; but of course I won't go if you don't want me to. Let me see. I can return the seventy-five in a day or two."

The Colonel gave him twenty-five dollars, and he hastened away with foolish hope in his heart, eager, and with no shame in his mind. Poker, the American game—the American beast, blunts all sense of humiliation.

"Above the door of my Delphic temple I thought I'd written 'know thyself,' " mused the Colonel as slowly he walked along, having already forgotten the young man, "but I didn't write it there. If I did, some one has come along and rubbed it out. All along I have thought that it would make no difference whether this thing were a failure or a success, but now, face to face with one or the

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other—with almost certain failure, I find that it does make a difference. What will that woman think of me if I fail? Woman respects man for what man achieves. She may commiserate a failure, but she cannot love it. She thinks I'm strong, but strength means success. Reckon I was a fool to go into it. But if *he* comes to see it—yes, that will be more than worth all the trouble." He walked along bareheaded. "She sits and dreams, the youngster says. I wonder if she does dream of me. I dream of her, and I wonder—all the time wonder if she is the woman for me, if she would be my wife! But how am I to find out if I don't ask her, and how am I ever to summon will enough if this play should fail? To see a vanity conquer may charm a woman, but to see it conquered disgusts her. I wonder if I haven't philosophized about enough over her, and over everything else, for that matter. How sure a sign of the coming on of age—such profitless moralizing. Let's see what time it's getting to be."

Upon the dial of his watch he caught the light of a street lamp. It dazzled—the hour

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dodged and the minutes danced. A clock, a sullen bell somewhere on the sea of billowing time, began to strike—eight. The hour for the trial had come, the seating of the jury; and with feverishness in waves breaking over him, he turned toward the theater.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

DIDN'T WANT TO BE CONGRATULATED.

The jury was going in. What did those women know about life in the West? What knew the men, and what cared any of them for phases of American life other than the sort shamelessly exaggerated for the amusement of ultra taste? For what life did they care except for that evolved out of their own narrow environment or out of the "chronicled small beer" of the foreigner who despised America? The appropriateness of his sitting in a box was suggested to him by the press agent, but he shuddered at the thought of such publicity. He did not realize that he might sit there all night and that no one would necessarily associate him with the play. Self-consciousness ever feels that it has hung out a glaring sign. He did not sit at all, but walked about slowly, in the lobby, in front of the house—anywhere, wishing that it were all done with, that he were on a train, going West. Suddenly the orchestra broke out like a rash, into a red blare, and then came the

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whining of the fiddles as if everything that had thus far been done proved cause for regret. From what heart-broken wretch did the fellow with the trombone learn that stretching groan? What squawking parrot set the pitch for that rasping raw-hide called a "chello"? Such wailings and such cries could but foretell disaster. How indifferent everyone was; how young men and young women blabbed and gabbed. Didn't they know that something was about to take place? And that something? Ah, a failure, and why not have enough of heart to treat it with less glibness? That old fellow down there in an aisle seat, cane, white silk thing about his neck—he knew that there was to be sorrow for some one and seemed pleased at the prospect. Had he gone to a morgue to rehearse that cough? Near him was a fat woman, talking about the illness of her dog. Damn the dog and her, too. Why did she come? Why didn't she go to a cat and dog hospital and feel at home? That foreigner, gibbering in some scroll-saw tongue! Well, it would soon be time to knock him down and drag him out. It was the infernal orchestra that so set everything upon the sharp edge. Would

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it never leave off its whinings and groanings? Was that tune marked out by a pair of compasses, continuously to go round and round? Yes, it could quit. Suddenly it hushed its whining over its numerous diseases, and the curtain slowly rose, but why that barber-shop scrape, as it went up? The play began, but indistinctly, for the audience was talking. And that woman, that one there with the pale, sleepy-looking degenerate whose breast was as thin as a washboard, did she come to the theater to arrange her hair? Why didn't the actors talk louder? Was it understood that the thing should be played confidentially? Such coughing throughout the house! Were all New York theater-goers consumptive? That fat miner, puffing his lines! About how long would it take him to drop dead?

In a box sat the Widow, Imogene and Sammy. The Colonel wondered how they could have got into the house without his having seen them—and didn't that young scoundrel have respect enough not to talk to the girl, now, at this critical time? The Widow seemed weary, or sad, but so refined was her face, so gentle her manner that to look at her was a peace and a rest, an inspiration. Skid-

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der! Why did not the clapping of hands welcome the return of "New York's old favorite?" Had he forgotten his lines? What was the matter with him?

Suddenly the Colonel forgot the play, the actors—the Widow. Off to the right stood a man, leaning on the railing. Closer toward him the Colonel moved, gazing intently. The man turned his face fuller toward him. Was it Sim Groggin? Closer—the man wheeled about and almost shot through the door, the Colonel racing after him. Down the steps in front, down at a bound. The man was running. The Colonel shouted at him; he ran across the street, the Colonel in pursuit, calling upon him to stop; but he dodged in among the passers-by, and so he was lost. But the hunt was not given up, and now the American turned from street to street, from hotel to hotel, looking eagerly about him, but not knowing whither he went. After a long time he looked up and there was Daly's, with the people pouring out. As he pushed his way through the crowd he caught the words, here and there: "Won't go;" "failure;" "nothing to it;" "who is Skidder?" He was glad to get out from among those nettles. He

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would have liked to tread them deep into the earth. A bit of slang came to him: "Make 'em like it." "I will," he mused. "I'll make them open their mouths and stretch their necks for it like young mocking birds." But how well he knew the lameness of the threat. Slowly he walked toward the hotel, not disappointed, for he had reconciled himself to failure, and besides his main object had been attained; that wolf had seen it, not all, but had seen enough to know that he and his treachery were to be pictured. Yet he was angered because the out-pouring crowd had seemed not indeed to gloat over his defeat, but to yawn over it.

Upon entering the hotel he would have gone at once to his room to hide himself, and to feast his mind with hating the man whom he had followed, whose throat he felt that he should like preyfully to cut, but Sammy came hastening to meet him—said that the ladies were in the Turkish room, that they were anxious to see him, to congratulate him.

"None of that," replied the Colonel. "Don't go too far with me, Sam."

"Why, dad, what's the matter with you? Didn't you see your play? Don't you know

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it went all right?" Affectionately he took the Colonel's arm, and so warm he seemed after the cold heartlessness of the show house, so genuine, that the American hugged him close, said that he was glad to have him back again. Imogene came forward with "dad" on her lips, and then the Widow, through a mist, reached forth her hand; and the Colonel laughed in his deeply mellow way, but when they began to congratulate him, the music was gone, leaving no echo.

"No, little Imogene, no; don't tell me that, my dear. You were all ashamed of me and you know it. I felt it. Madam, please don't say you liked it—you who must be such a judge of plays. I am easily pleased, it is true, but don't try it now."

"Oh, but my dear friend, I will speak," said the Widow, her hand on his arm. "I have been silent so long, you know, for weeks—so long that you must let me speak. Sit down, please. Sit here," and she drew forward a chair for him. "There are no idlers here and we can talk. I did like the play. It is elemental and strong."

"Ah, madam, in your retirement you may have forgotten many things," said the Col-

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onel, "but you have not forgotten how to be kind."

"Stop calling me madam, and listen to me. I know that at this time particularly you don't want flattery forced upon you; I know you want the truth and that is exactly what I am giving you, as I see it for myself. Of course the play has faults. May I say that in it there is not enough of your own whim or your penetration into the moods of others. It seems that you have not so much aimed at an entertainment as you have striven to express some boiling wrath within yourself; you——"

"Madam—Margaret, your penetration would pick out a thorn. The play is a sort of revenge. But it is, so far as the public is concerned, a failure—miserable failure. Those who attended went especially to avenge themselves upon the fact that it was written by an American."

"Now, Colonel, you surely haven't taken up that notion. What difference does it make to an audience who writes a thing so long as it is entertaining? The fact is, the audience was attracted largely by the fact that the play was written by an American in New York."

"Attracted to the house? I grant you.

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But you must know that sometimes we are attracted toward an expression of our displeasure, and that was what those wretches were looking for to-night, an opportunity to be displeased and to show it."

"But that is where I can't understand you. The audience was not displeased. There was a great deal of applause, and I was disappointed when you refused to come before the curtain at the end of the third act."

"What! Did they call for me?"

"Is it possible that you criticise an audience when you didn't see the play yourself?"

"The fact is, I was in and out—dodged out—on business just before—well, just before anything took place. But I came back and was mixed up with the crowd and heard enough to last me for a time. Let us not think about it."

Sammy and the girl were off in a corner looking at curios. "Didn't take them long," said the Colonel.

"No, flew to each other's arms—created for each other," said the Widow, with an expression of tenderness in her eyes. "And how nobly he talked of the struggle before him, the strife necessary to conquer, and all for

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her. She appreciates it all and will help him—be proud to work with him; but, confidentially, Colonel, their struggle shall not be so great as they think. I will see to it that they are well started.

The Colonel thanked her, spoke of something else, but could not keep his mind off his play. He could see that Margaret pitied him, and he writhed under it. Sammy and Imogene wandered away. The talk dragged. Margaret looked tired. The Colonel arose to bid her good night. "I hope you'll sleep well," she said.

In his old-time way he laughed, and his eyes were in unison with his mellow voice. "Oh, yes, like a top. I don't know why any man should ever have said that he slept like a top; don't see how a top could sleep. Wonder if it weren't a misprint? Don't you suppose it was intended to read, 'slept like a cop?' Well, good night." He took her hand and it was tremulous for a moment and then passive. "Glad you came down to see—but no matter, it will be all right in the end. If you see Sammy tell him to come to my room before he goes to bed."

He left the door unlocked and was in bed

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when Sammy came. "Hand me that pipe over there and then sit down," said the American. "Match, too, please. Thank you." For a time he smoked in silence, sitting up, leaning back against the headboard; and the young fellow "stood about" flinchingly, as if he expected something not wholly agreeable.

"Sammy, he was there."

"Who, dad?"

"Sim Groggin."

"What! You don't say so!" He ceased to stand about irresolutely; he sat down on the bed. The Colonel continued. "Not a word of it to any one, you understand? Do you hear?"

"Yes, dad, I hear."

"All right. Having been furnished with the name I don't see why the detectives couldn't find him, but they didn't or pretended that they didn't, one and the same thing." He sat up straighter, gathering the covering about his legs, smoking fast for a moment or two. "I thought he would be there—thought the name of the play would attract him. But I hardly believe that he associated me with the writing of it. But he was there, all the

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same, standing near the door; and when I first discovered him it seemed to me that I was shooting at him with a rifle, and he turned around with a start and saw me. Then he darted through the door, and I after him, headlong, down the two or three steps to the street. But he got away from me. I had nothing to shoot with—wouldn't have shot anyway; I wanted to choke him, down, to the ground, into the mud, under my feet."

"I am glad you didn't catch him, dad."

"What! And here not long ago you begged for the sweet privilege of killing him—if occasion offered? Do you remember that?"

"Yes, I remember. But I've changed since then."

"Yes, that's natural," said the American, slowly smoking. "I don't blame you. Of course I didn't intend that you should touch him, but I wanted you to feel that—that he ought to be dead."

"I do feel that way, dad. I feel that every man should be dead, when the time comes. But I don't want to kill any one; don't want you to kill any human being."

"I wouldn't, but I'd kill a snake that looks something like a human being. And if I can

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get hold of him, he'll have to answer. You see the detectives can only locate him for me. They can't arrest him; and I may have trouble in getting hold of him, but it will come."

"I thought that love softened the heart," said the young man, and the Colonel looked at him a long time, slowly smoking. "It does, my boy; it sometimes softens both the heart and the brain."

"The brain, dad? No, I don't think that. None but degenerate love can do that, and there is no such thing as degenerate love, for all love is creative and strong. But I thought that your love for that beautiful woman——"

"Yes, that's all right, but I am not giving love in exchange for pity. No matter, though, how much I loved her, I could not forget the debt I owe the past. The notes are due, and when opportunity presents them, they shall be honored. Yes, sir, but don't you worry. There shall be no sensational murder, no penitentiary or electric chair. I'll manage it and you know that I am a good manager."

"But think of the sensation if the public should know who you are."

"I'll manage that part, too."

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"But, dad, when are you going to tell Aunt Mag the truth? She must find it out sooner or later, you know."

"She shall know when the time comes. In her sympathy she is at present sorrowing over my defeat, but at the same time she cannot hide her mild contempt for me. That will do now. Good night. Spring the catch, so the door'll lock. Don't want to get up. Don't worry," he added, as Sammy turned toward the door, "but at the same time don't indulge the hope that there is to be any foolish softening toward that wolf."

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CHAPTER XXV.

NEW YORK'S OPINION.

Early in the morning the Colonel sent out for the newspapers, and when they had been brought by a boy and placed on the foot of the bed, it was a long time before the Crit from the West had courage to receive the opinion of New York. He mused that it was not for himself that he cared. From men he could stand any degree of punishment, but from one woman's pity he shrank timorously. If those papers assaulted him she would no longer make even faint effort to hide that tender sting, that sympathy worse than contempt. He got up, dressed and stood looking from the window. The great town was throwing off its semblance of rest, the semi-drowse of a feverish night. Boys were darting hither and thither, vending Manhattan's opinion of the Colonel. And there, on the bed, lay that opinion, in several sections and no doubt in several degrees of shading, dark, darker and black, but all dark. Perhaps, however, it might not all be somber.

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On some distant hilltop the moon might throw a smile down through the clouds. But how was he to know unless he looked? He did look. Here are some of the smiles: "Stupid conventionalism. . . . There may have been worse plays written, but they certainly were never produced. . . . But for the ranting of the actors the audience might have slept peacefully. . . . Instead of 'by an American in New York,' they might better have said 'by a Jack Rabbit in Town.' . . . The author could not stay in the house. This proves that he is not wholly devoid of taste. . . . "

The Colonel tramped the papers beneath his feet. He walked up and down the room, dragging some of them about with him. He would slink away from every one, from Sammy; it was to be a day of seclusion, but of search for the man who had fled through the streets. Out of the hotel he sneaked, into the street, and then for breakfast he entered a restaurant that was as quiet and as obscure as anything could be in Broadway. And there, first table from the door, sat a man with a newspaper propped in front of him, reading of "Glick City's" shame. The Colonel could

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see, for there was a picture of Skidder, and how they had scored him upon this his return from "fresh achievements abroad."

The breakfast, no matter what it might have been, could not have escaped being bad. The Colonel cursed a mutton chop, scolded a girl, gave her a dollar as a fee due from quick repentance, saw her smile as if her heart had never known a sorrow; and then he hastened off to call at a detective agency whose services he had engaged early after his coming to New York.

"We don't think you have cause for complaint of our inefficiency," said the manager, as the Colonel sat with him in a private office. "Some time had elapsed since you had seen the man, and as he must necessarily have changed, your description of him could have furnished but a vague clew to his present appearance."

"That's good," replied the Colonel, wondering why a man couldn't talk thus in a play. "In your first paragraph you make a strong case. But I had supplied you with more than a time-faded picture. I had given you his name."

"Yes," said the detective, "but no such

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name was found on the hotel registers of New York or of any of the neighboring towns. Whenever we ran across a man who answered to your description, we looked him up, and once or probably twice we notified you that we thought your man had been seen. But of course we had no authority to grab him and to hold him until you should come."

There was nothing to do but to go away, and this was what the Colonel did, wandering about with no aim except to avoid meeting anyone who might have a "consoling" acquaintance with him. At noon-time he went into a rush-order place; and now, hungry, he ate with a sort of revenge against the scoundrels who had appointed unto themselves the province of bass-drumming New York's opinion. During the afternoon he wandered about in the old parts of the town, searching for the past to cover with its soft moss the flint edges of the present. Toward night he went to Daly's. Six seats had been sold.

"Ah," said the Colonel, speaking to the young fellow in the box office, "they sometimes hang out a sign, 'Standing room only,' don't they?"

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"Yes, they have done such things, but not lately."

"Well, suppose I design a—a motto to hang out? An attractively painted thing which shall read, 'To hell with you.' How would that do?"

"I'm afraid it wouldn't do very well here, sir. Ah, may I ask if you expect to take the play off soon?"

"Don't you worry about that. This is not for publication in those scandal mongers, but I've got money enough to run this thing till the latest one of the cows comes home."

He went around and stumbled up the narrow stairs leading to the dressing rooms, and found Skidder as blue as a "huckleberry." The Colonel clapped him on the shoulder and bade him cheer up.

"All our work for nothing," said the actor, puffing his pipe, the smoke floating among the cosmetics, whiskers, wigs, lotions on his "make-up" shelf. "All for nothing."

"Not if I know it," replied the Colonel. "You and your company go ahead and play just as if the house were crowded and you'll get your pay just as promptly and as cheerfully as if it were a roaring success."

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"But such a thing can't go on, you know, Colonel."

"I'gad, sir, it can go on till I tell it to stop. Ring up when the time comes and do your best. That's all I ask, and when it comes that I can't pay you, why, you'll see some of those banks go stumping off on one leg, I'll tell you that."

Out in a corridor, not much wider than a cattle trail through a cane brake, a dog barked, and instantly seemed to have been smothered and taken away. The Colonel spoke of Miss Baith, and Skidder smiled. "Didn't you hear her submerging her dog?" he asked, putting on his brown wig. "I'll go and see if she's in condition to receive you."

The Colonel protested, but Skidder darted out, suspenders dangling behind him, and was gone not more than a minute when he called to the author to come on. Miss Baith's reception of the American was gracious, but not particularly so, considering that it was his generous pocket that had enabled her to re-establish herself in the confidence and good opinion of a landlady given to gossip and to complaining; but in the light of the fact that he had just been done to a pan-fish brown

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by the roasters and the friers of the press, her bearing was singularly engaging. And, what may add to the apparent sweetness of her disposition was the fact that she herself had not escaped the hot attention of those red-browed cooks. The dog barked, but grabbed and squeezed into submission, was stored away somewhere, to wheeze loud and occasionally to fret. Miss Baith was glad to see the Colonel looking so well. Was he feeling well? Never better. Silence. She believed that the play would yet be a go. So many successes started out that way. The Colonel thought of the six tickets that had been sold during the day and cleared his throat. Silence. She hoped that he did not mind criticism so evidently biased. Oh, he thrived on it, but at the same time he would like to have at least one of the scoundrels by the throat. How long was the play likely to run? She was thinking of some gowns that had been ordered a few days before. Oh, it would run long enough to prove to those villains that it could run as long as it wanted to. She liked to see a man determined and brave; it was so rare these days. He took leave of her and groped his way down the stairs.

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Out in front an old woman asked him to buy a package of chewing gum.

He went to the Waldorf and strode up and down "Millionaire lane," having braved himself into braving anything, and was nodded at now and then. Suddenly a man bowed down before him. "Why——" "Hold on," commanded the Colonel. "My name is Boyers here."

"Oh, you don't say."

"Yes, a mere whim, you understand, but one that must be respected, for a time at least. I have met a few acquaintances here, and of them all have made the same request—met them again sometimes and introduced them to persons whom I have—have, well you might say, taken up with here."

The man bowed low and passed on. Sammy found the Colonel and told him that the ladies were in a quiet little parlor, a nook almost hidden from the world. The youth took him by the arm, spoke persuasively, and there was a show of resistance, but he yielded. The Widow, in a rocking chair, looked like an exhibition of creamy lace. In a chair beside her lay her fan. She took it up and bade the Colonel sit down. Imogene came laughing

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forth from a blue plush corner, took his hands, called him dad, and playfully made as if she would nestle against his breast, so broad but withal so troubled; but remarking that those who chanced to pass might not know the relationship, she sat down. Sammy hovered near her.

"You have been so busy," said Margaret, speaking to the Colonel, "that you doubtless haven't heard or at least haven't been able to remember many of the details concerning the near wedding of this charmingly foolish pair."

"No, madam, I——"

"Margaret," she corrected him.

"I thank you," he said, bowing. "No, I haven't heard any of the delightful particulars."

"Isn't he grand!" Imogene exclaimed, and Sammy looked up as if he would call attention to the fact that she was the wisest creature who, at that time, happened to inhabit the face of the earth.

"Well," said Margaret, "they are to be married just as soon as they can possibly get ready, which will take only a few weeks."

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"And then, dad," cried Imogene, "we are going to America."

"Lord bless your sweet lips," broke out the Colonel. "Your very words carry me back. Yes, and then if you want to go to Europe, all right."

"Yes, after a while," she said. "But for a long time we'll have to work to get money enough. We won't mind that, though; it will be fun."

"Have you any idea as what particular sort of work you are to do?" the Colonel inquired of the girl, but looking at Margaret and catching the tender glow in her eye.

"Well, I suppose I'll have to milk the cows. And I won't wear anything red, and—and consequently I needn't be afraid of them. And Sammy will dig up the sugar beets and water the horses; and on Sunday we'll ride mustangs to church, forty miles away, taking our guns with us to persuade the Indians to let us alone—oh, I've got it all mapped out, and it is beautiful. My ancestors froze their feet in a Puritan church while trying to keep their hands warm enough to shoot a fire-lock, and in spirit I'm going right back among them and be natural."

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Sammy roared with laughter. He said that to hear her talk was better than a humorous lecture, and taking the average humorous lecture as the standard, this might not have been much short of the truth. But it was time for him and the girl to wander away, and they wandered, looking at things as if they had not seen them more than a hundred times.

"Beautiful," said Margaret. "Ah, and let them bathe in this pearly sea, now while the tide sings sweet and low. The breakers will come soon enough."

"It is the fear that sometimes invites them to come," the Colonel replied. "The brave live longer than the cowards."

"I believe that is true," she said, and toward him with the slow movement of her fan she wafted, not the scent, but the merest suggestion of a blooming plum tree. And so they talked of many things, but never did she seek to lead him toward the brier thicket, the criticisms of his play; but in his heart he felt that she pitied him, and when this feeling was strongest, he bade her good night. In his room he thought of the afternoon papers and sent for them, with the hope, acknowledged

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within himself, that there might be some "change in public opinion," but there it was, an echo of the morning—"dull as a tale forced upon you." . . . "A snore set to lugubrious tune." And he went to bed, hoping that Margaret might not see these tirades of additional insult.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY ROOM.

Early on the following morning the Colonel called at the detective agency. Groggin had not been "spotted," though no effort had been spared to "locate" him. It was, however, only a question of time. "Yes," said the Colonel, "let it alone and eternity itself will be only a question of time."

Back to the hotel he went, feeling utterly alone. No longer was Sammy company for him, and fearing the soft light of pity in her eyes, he shrank from the almost sure chance of meeting Margaret. But in the men's café he sat down to muse over her. The waiter came, took his order, cat-stepped away; and the Colonel continued to muse, deeper and deeper, into her character, her nature. How different she was from what he had at first conceived her to be; how much more human, home-like, American. Surely she had told the truth in her attitude toward society, that she did not strive to be a part of it. In New York his mission would soon be fulfilled,

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whatever it might be, but had not the very opposites of the town, the antagonisms, educed a sort of attachment? Did he care to go away, or was it Margaret whom he dreaded to leave? It was. Then why not ask her to go with him, to be his wife? Concerning marriage he held what he termed the old, the sentimental idea; that there must be love, romance, no mere business resolve to live together, looking after each other's comfort—partners; he would rather quarrel with a woman if she loved him and he loved her than to live in the regulated agreement of suited matrimony. But he could not arise to the feeling that she loved him. In many ways he had full confidence in himself, was arrogant; he would step out into the street and advise a teamster as to the most effective way to start a balky horse; that morning he had halted to show a number of workmen that they were not digging a foundation in the proper manner; he would have passed adverse judgment on a composer who had received the approval of the world, but he could not say to himself that Margaret loved him.

Late in the afternoon he went down to the

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theatre. "Well, how are we now?" he inquired of the young man.

"Slow."

"Any advance over yesterday's rush? Have they been kicking against one another's heels?"

"No, the other fellow got out of the way."

"Other fellow?"

"Yes, the one in front. Colonel, we sold only two seats to-day."

"All right. See that the two get in and then shut the doors. Don't let 'em out. Any—what do you call 'em? Enchores? Any last night?"

"Didn't hear of any. Don't you think we'd better paper the house? The press agent says you told him——"

"I told him not to go out into the highways and compel them to come in. Let them stay out."

"Well, I guess they will."

"Wholly unconscious of the fact, I suppose, that it doesn't make an infernal bit of difference to me."

In the evening he met Margaret, and in her eyes there was that same soft light, sunset after-glow of a summer's day. Together

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they walked up and down the marble corridor, and then they sat in a corner, listening to the music. Occasionally Sammy and Imogene came by, always laughing out of their eyes, always happy; and like a luminous mist the hours floated away, and still she had not mentioned having seen the criticisms. But he knew that she had seen them, for in her manner toward him there was even more of tenderness, of sympathy.

"Did I ask you if you enjoyed your visit to the country?"

"I don't remember. Well, yes, in a way," she said, dreamily, as if she were looking back upon a scene. "The house was very quiet, for love makes no noise—I mean Sammy and Imogene, and I made myself think that I was enjoying the gathering forces of my own strength. There are times, you know, when we feel that we should be stronger, when deeply we regret not having been stronger—and then, feeling that we can be, that we *are*, we find pleasure in the—the dominance of moral rectitude."

"That is perhaps the way a man feels when he knows he has been a fool, Margaret, but I never could get any pleasure out of resolv-

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ing never to be so again because I learned a long time ago that I should. But how could you feel that you ought to have been stronger? What have you done that was weak?"

"Oh, you don't know, you can't know," she said.

"No, not unless you tell me."

"And if I should, you'd have a contempt for me."

"I couldn't be placed in such a position. Margaret, as now I look back, as I look at the light that sometimes comes into your eyes, it seems to me that I never knew a real soul until I met you—yes, one, a long time ago, but her soul, beautiful as it was, could not have been so great as yours."

"Colonel, I forbid you to talk that way. Remember you are——"

"Yes, I remember everything, but before I leave this town I may tell you something that——" Sammy and Imogene came up. "How now, youngsters? Have you had your bread and milk for the night?"

They passed on, laughing out of their merry eyes, and the Colonel was about to catch up his broken thread when the voices of two men reached him, one, especially, for

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he caught the words, "Yes, the newspapers skinned him alive." And Margaret heard, too, for the look of pity came into her eyes. Shortly afterward he bade her good-night—did not notice that she was loth to go, that she parted from him resignedly; he did not note the sadness in her voice except as it conveyed to him the pity and the sorrow over his defeat.

Early after breakfast on the following day he wandered about, as if looking for freedom from worry, for rest, and he thought of the quiet place whither Margaret had gone, where strength had come back to her. He knew not where the place was, but remembered that it must lie somewhere within the neighborhood of New Haven. He had been walking uptown and was now not far from the railway station. "Why not take a run up there?" he mused. "The fresh air will do me good." This resolved itself into decision, and he got into a train which was about ready to start. Here and there a glimpse of the Sound reminded him of the far West, of the water out from Seattle, and he was dreaming pleasantly when the train reached New Haven. Here he walked be-

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neath the great elms of old Yale's campus, musing over the many feet that had gone before, to destruction, to death on the field of battle, when looking up suddenly he saw something that made him catch his breath. He saw a man entering a doorway just across from the college, a restaurant, and with no thought of the strange and undignified sight he might afford, he ran toward the place, entered and demanded of an attendant:

"Where did that man go—the one that just came in?"

In the rear was a room fitted up in sixteenth century style, and toward it the attendant gestured. The Colonel entered the room. Over in a corner, with his arms on a table, in a chair old in the memory of this, a former student, sat Sim Groggin. The Colonel was between him and the door. He looked up. With his hand the Colonel made a downward gesture. "Don't move, Groggin."

He was perfectly calm. "I am not moving," he said. "You know it is not my habit to run away, and I ran the other night because I didn't want to kill you. And may I ask what you want with me now, Blandin?"

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"I want to feast my eyes upon your infamous countenance."

"And when your eyes are no longer hungry—what then?"

"You ought to know."

"Murder? Is that your game?"

"No name you call it, sir, will soften my purpose. I am glad to see you so quiet. It is only the fool that rants. And it is only the weakling that relents."

"I haven't called you a fool, Blandin. I did you a mortal wrong—that's a fact, but I'll venture to say that I have suffered for it more than you have."

How old he looked, how hollow-eyed, as if haunted.

"I ought to have been killed—I acknowledge that. I don't think there ever was such a wretch. But we were out among desperate men, and civilization had taught that treachery in a case of love——"

"No more of that!" The Colonel was now standing near him.

"Well, what then? I hope you don't think that I'm begging for my life. You've had cause to know that I'm a scoundrel, but never an occasion to believe me a coward, except

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when I've dodged you—because I didn't want to kill you. And now a murder within the shadow of old Yale! Rather out of harmony, don't you think?"

"I'll grant you the best of the argument, Groggin; I don't care to argue; I have quit the practice of law."

"Or the observance of it, eh?"

"That is very good and very true. But with both of us in it, Groggin, the world is crowded. Civilization has advanced—but I am not here to expand upon the absurdity of my position. You and I belong to another state of society. God, it does my immovable heart good to gaze upon that hell-map countenance of yours. You say I have no cause to think you a coward. That is true. You spoke as if you did not value your life. Then why preserve it? Your passing away might mean a favor to some one who has not yet been unfortunate enough to meet you. Your
——"

"All of which leads to what, Blandin?"

"That you may kill yourself if you choose."

"And if I don't choose?"

"I shall have to kill you—violently. There are easy ways, and I don't care particularly to

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see you suffer—to gasp. All I want is to know that you are no longer in the world.”

“You don’t object to my thinking a moment?”

“No, but only a moment, for we might be interrupted. It is only the devilish belief in the waiter’s mind that he is neglecting us that has left us free.”

“You were always humorous, Blandin.”

“Don’t repeat my name so often. Are you thinking?”

“Yes.” He straightened up. “I was thinking that you might waive causes and yield to generosity—to give me a chance. You were always willing to take a chance. And after all it doesn’t or wouldn’t matter much which one goes out of the world—so far as the other is concerned. The chance I mean is this. Suppose we shake dice to determine which one of us shall kill himself quietly in his room to-night? Absurd, yes, but so is your position this minute. If you win I’ll keep my contract.”

“Groggin, you’ve got me cornered.”

“Well, then, let me walk out.”

“No.”

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"Then as a fair-minded man how can you turn down my proposition?"

"Cornered."

"Shall I call for a dice box? You beat me out of a law library once, before we were partners. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, and carried it off at one load in a gunnysack."

Groggin smiled. "You want me dead, but you don't want to commit murder. It would spoil your life, and you have much to live for. If you should lose, you quietly pass away after making all necessary arrangements."

"Groggin, I am the injured one, the one who ought to blow out your brains. Nobody but a fool would place his life upon such a hazard."

"And nobody but a fool would follow me as you have done."

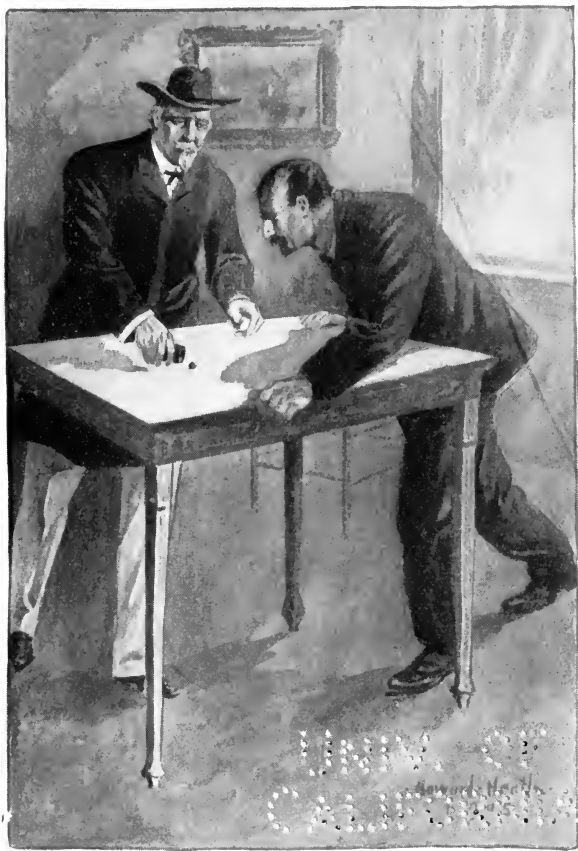
"That is true. I tell you I am cornered."

"Well, a cornered man ought to accept."

"I do accept. Hit the bell."

Groggin struck the bell. The waiter came.
"Dice box, please."

From a shelf the waiter took down a dice box, turned the dice out into his hand, saw



"THROW."

1. The first group of people who are interested in the study of the history of the world are the historians. They are the people who study the past and write about it. They are the people who tell us what happened and why it happened. They are the people who help us to understand the world and ourselves.

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that there were five, replaced them, put the box on the table and withdrew.

"Now," said Groggin, "we both swear to carry out the terms of the contract."

"We do. You know I will."

"Shall I shake?"

"Yes, three times, and no horses."

"All right."

Without a tremor Groggin took up the box and slowly began to shake it.

"Throw."

He threw two sixes, two deuces and an ace. He studied. "I don't know whether to try to fill here or not."

"Use your own judgment."

He left the sixes. Another throw—another six and two fives. "Full hand. I don't know whether to leave it or not. Only one more throw. I'll leave it."

How quiet it all was, how remindful of the days when in the West a man set no store upon his life.

The Colonel took the box and threw—three fours, a five and a tray. "Pretty fair if I can help." He threw again—did not help. He took up the two dice and shook the box round and round and turned it down upon

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the table. "Your death or mine under there, Groggin."

"Lift it up."

The Colonel raised the box. Another four. Groggin did not start, did not wince. "Well, I'm glad it's over with," he said. "Many a time I've thought of doing the thing—so I haven't lost much. Well, are you through with me?"

"Yes. To-night, remember."

"To-night. I'm at the Holland House—George Wilber—in—the book. You'll see it in the papers to-morrow. Where are you?"

"Waldorf. J. Boyers."

"I may telephone you to-night."

"Very well. Good-bye."

"Shake hands?"

"No, if I should touch you I'd kill you. Good-bye."

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CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

"Give human nature a chance and it will nearly always be a fool," the Colonel mused on his way back to the city. But this reflection, wise as he fancied it to be, was not sufficient. He brought up arguments to sustain his conviction that Groggin ought to be dead, that his death would serve a purpose commended by the Fates, whoever they might be; and so he kept his heart from softening. But when the newspapers should come out with their screaming lines, and when in the streets the boys should cry the suicide, could he look into Margaret's tender eyes? Yes, and see that same light of pity for himself, for his tragedy, the wilful murder of a modest hope. Ah, but had the hope been modest? Was it not a revenge rather than an aspiration that had fathered the play, and was not that revenge almost accomplished? It would be that night. Groggin would keep his oath, and when he was out of it, the world would look better.

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In the evening he found Margaret in an alcove, in company with several acquaintances, among them the Doctor and a seller of gold bricks from Mexico; but the company, afraid that the American might talk about the play, soon wandered off, leaving Margaret and the Colonel alone. Sammy and Imogene had gone to see a comic opera. Margaret had reminded the girl that we go to *hear* an opera, and laughingly she had replied: "Not this sort of one, auntie. Do we, Sambo?"

"You seem sadder than usual to-night," Margaret remarked to the Colonel, and he shook his head. "No, I think not."

"I want to see the play again."

"Please don't."

"But I tell you I liked it. How long will it run?"

"It ought not to run a moment longer, since its mission has been fulfilled; but the company—guess I'll give them an honorarium to quit."

Slowly she was moving her fan, and to his senses came that same suggestion of a plum tree in bloom. "If it is not to be a success it is a shame to spend so much money on it," she said, and he knew that the Doctor and the

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gold brick seller had been gloating over his failure. "I don't regret the cost," he replied.

"Won't you please let me bear part of it? Won't you if I ask it as a favor? I have some money that I don't need—ten, twenty thousand. Won't you please take it?"

"No, my dear—I beg your pardon. I can afford all that I am likely to throw away. Don't think about it, please."

How handsome she was; what a glory radiated from her hair. He looked at her arms, her beautiful hands, and forgot the man at the Holland House, forgot everything on earth but her. Was it time for him to tell her that he was not married, that he had fibbed as a joke at first and had turned it into a sustained lie, to hold her as a companion? No, it was not time. He would wait until after the boys had cried out something in the street. And then he thought of Groggin, of the scene in the sixteenth century room, now so strange, so distinct, a vague dream. But the result was not to be a dream, though a sleep.

"You know," she said, "I threatened to tell you something that would cause you to hate me."

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"Ah, in that line, Margaret, I can give you cards and spades." A vision of dice, of a six full, arose in his mind.

"No, I think not, Colonel. But I have never done anything very bad. I have—been married twice."

"Twice," he repeated.

"Yes. The first time I married a man on his deathbed. It was a girlish romance, a foolish thing. If he had been well and strong probably I should not have married him. But as it was I did, and he died that day. Then, a number of years afterward I married a speculator who had dazzled me with his boldness. He failed in New York and went West. He was a—a brute, and I didn't go with him. We did not correspond, but I heard that he was in a fair way to strike a fortune in mining, so my lawyer kept track of him. Well, he died. And now comes a strange part of the story. Really he was worth nothing at the time of his death, but a man, the most generous man in the world—this man rather than take advantage of some sort of document, acknowledged an indebtedness to me of three hundred thousand dollars and forwarded the money to my lawyer.

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After this I took the name—a freakish thing—name of my first husband, for my family name was harsh and plebeian. Haven't I been weak? Now, don't you despise me?"

He shook his head, gazing at her. "And the name of the man who would not take advantage of a technicality?"

"James Blandin, the great Copper King. Did you ever meet him out West?"

A vision of Groggin arose, and the Colonel heard his own voice command, "Stop calling me Blandin."

"Yes, I have met him."

"I wrote to him before I took my first husband's name—was ashamed to write afterward."

A page came shouting: "Telephone for J. Boyers."

"Here, boy."

"The Holland House wishes to talk to you, sir."

The Colonel excused himself and hastened to the telephone booth. "Hello, who is it?"

"Groggin."

"Oh."

"It will all be over pretty soon, and I just thought I'd tell you I was going to keep my

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word—going by the gas route—am in my room now, and the door locked. I want you to know, Blandin, that no wretch ever suffered more than I have—and it may rob you of some of the sweets of your victory, but I want you to know that I'm glad it's about all over with. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"I had no idea that you were in that theatre or that you had anything to do with the play, but that amounts to nothing. The end has come, and——"

"No," shouted the Colonel. "No! Do you hear?"

No answer. The connection was cut off. The Colonel hastened to Margaret. "I must ask you to excuse me," he hastily began. "I must go at once——"

"Just a moment, Colonel. I want to ask you a question that I've wanted to ask before, but didn't. I had a brother in the West—Sim Groggin——"

"What!" the Colonel shouted. "Come with me, this minute—no time for wraps—with me." He seized her hand.

"Why, Colonel, what is the matter?"

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"Come, I tell you—case of life or death. Don't ask a question now. Come with me."

He almost dragged her till she ran to keep up with him. They jumped into a cab. "To the Holland House. Quick!—five dollars for you."

The driver whipped his horse. It was a whirl, a lunge, a sudden stop. Out he jumped, she following close. The Colonel threw down a gold piece and ran into the hotel, up to the counter. "George Wilber's room. Suicide—force the door. Send the house physician."

The door was forced. A stifling volume of gas poured out. Groggin was found unconscious on the bed. "It will all be made clear in time," the Colonel whispered to Margaret as the physician began swiftly to apply his art.

"Yes," she replied in low tones, looking on, "but why did you bring me? Who is the man?"

"Your brother. Hush—not a word." She looked at the man on the bed, at the Colonel, and was silent. "A few moments more and he would have been gone," said the physician. The windows were up. The sharp clack of

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hoofs beating the asphalt vibrated in the air. Already there were reporters in the room. They made inquiries of the physician. He nodded toward the Colonel. The American told them what he thought was enough; but to a reporter no one ever tells what is wanted, except as he suggests, as he opens an avenue for a story. "He is coming to," some one remarked. Margaret moved closer to the bed. She wanted to take Groggin's hand, but the physician said: "Not now, madam, please."

"He is my brother, sir."

"But he is my patient."

She moved back. A reporter inquired of the Colonel if he were not the author of the play at Daly's.

"Yes, and this man was once a partner of mine. I had not seen him for a long time. He didn't know that I was here. Despondent."

"And your name, please?"

"I don't care to discuss personalities. My name has nothing to do with this affair—so far as the public is concerned."

That statement made his name of vital concern to the public. Groggin began to mutter. "Go away and let me alone. It must



"AH," HE SAID, "IT'S YOUR OLD VOICE, BLANDIN—JIM—
YOUR OLD VOICE."

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be." He opened his eyes and looked up at the Colonel. "You see I'm not a liar. I will keep my word."

"No," said the Colonel. "Your life is your own."

"It is of no account. I ought to be dead. I'm a pauper."

"Not a pauper, Sim, as long as I have anything, and you know what that means."

Margaret was kneeling beside the bed.

Groggin raised up. Tears streamed out of his eyes. "Ah," he said, "it is your old voice, Blandin—Jim—your old voice."

Margaret looked at the Colonel. She said nothing. She sobbed.

The air was cold and the physician pulled down one of the windows. He said that he must insist upon every one leaving the room. The patient showed signs of natural sleep. He had not recognized his sister. She begged the physician to permit her to remain. The Colonel insisted and the medical man yielded. And now all was quiet. The hours passed. Groggin awoke. His sister was near him, spoke and he looked at her and took her hand and pressed it to his lips. "A long time," he said. "Where is Jim?"

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"Waiting to take me back to the Waldorf," she answered.

"And you know him. There's only one." He slept again.

It was after daylight when the Colonel and Margaret returned to the hotel. On the way not a word was spoken. As they were getting out of the cab she said: "And your name is Blandin—the man who——"

"Not now," he broke in. "We shall talk of that some other time."

* * * * *

Boys in the street were shouting the sensation of the day. "All about Blandin, the Great Copper King, author of the play at Daly's!" His wealth was estimated at seventy-five millions, and he was said to be the most peculiar man in America. The attempted suicide of Groggin was interwoven, and was explained no further than that it was a deep mystery.

The Colonel slept until nearly four o'clock in the afternoon. Numerous reporters had called, but as he had left orders not to be disturbed, and especially as he was a copper king, his wishes were observed. As he was

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in the elevator going down, he heard two men talking about his play. "Went to the theatre as early as ten o'clock, but couldn't get a thing," said one of them. "Every seat was sold, not only for to-night, but far in advance. It may be a month before I can get in."

Sammy had not disturbed the Colonel, but for a long time had waited for him below. With a laugh the Colonel held forth his hand. "Understand that they've got a rousing show down at Daly's," said he. "I wanted to see it, but there's not a seat to be had for love or money. Ah, this town is infatuated with art. Now look here, don't you thank me that Groggin is alive. I didn't weaken, I'll tell you that. The man that weakens is a fool. And now, my boy, I've got a delicate commission for you. Go to your Aunt Margaret and tell her I lied about being married. Talk as you never talked before in your life."

"I told her just now, dad; didn't think it a violation of confidence now, you know."

"Hah, you did? And what did she say? Come, out with it. Everybody's gazing at us. Let's go out here. Now, what did she

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say?" he repeated when they had gone out upon the sidewalk.

"Cried, dad; broke down and cried."

"Huh. Where is she now?"

"In her apartments."

"Lead me there."

* * * * *

Sammy rapped on the door. It was opened by Imogene. The Colonel kissed her. Margaret was reclining on a sofa. "Go out, you two," said the Colonel. They went out, Sammy and the girl. Margaret did not look at him; she did not speak. Her face was half hidden in a pillow. Her eyes were closed. The Colonel sat down beside her.

"How could you have done that?" she sobbed.

"Oh, because I thought the world would be better with him out of it."

"I don't mean that. How could you have deceived me?"

"I—I started in with lying and couldn't stop. Maybe you don't know how hard it is to stop when once you begin. It's like going down Pike's Peak on a sled. I found in you a companion before I knew it, Margaret.

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It was beautiful—free, and I didn't want to spoil it. How new it was, such a companion—and you must know that women of the world are trying all the time to work a man in my position—I beg your pardon, I knew you wouldn't. But I loved your companionship. And now can you forgive a fool sufficiently to love him and to marry him? Can you?"

She strove to dry her eyes; she sat up and looked at him. "You will not want to marry me when I have told you something," she said. "I am a wicked woman."

"Prove it," he demanded, attempting to take her hand, but she drew it away from him.

"I *can* prove it, and before I do—before I drive you away, I must thank you for being—being the noblest man in the world, for sending me a fortune that you could just as easily have kept for yourself."

"I'm not gone. I stay to call for the proof that you are a wicked woman."

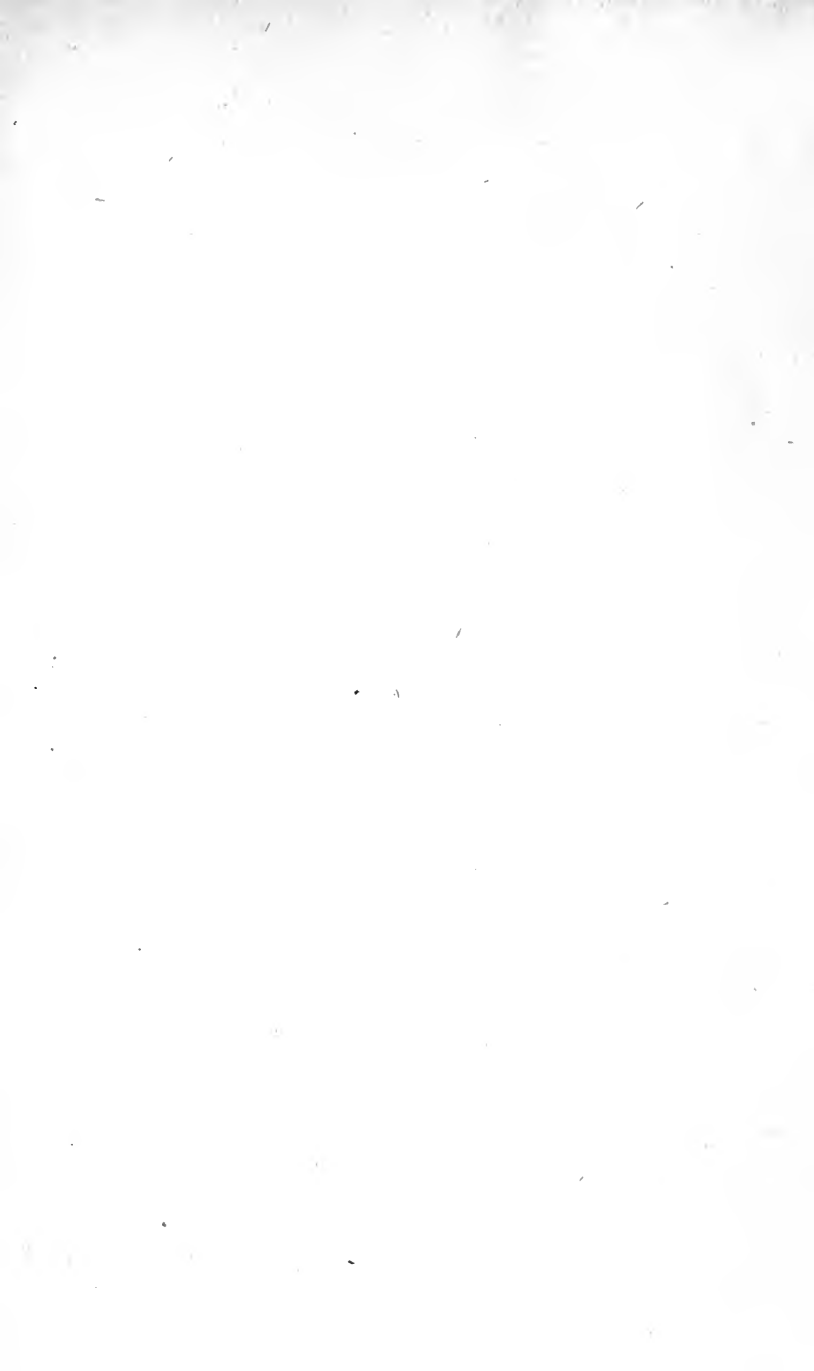
"You shall have the proof. I thought you were married, but I loved you. I didn't want to wrong any one, but I loved you. I despised myself, but I loved you, and I went away to

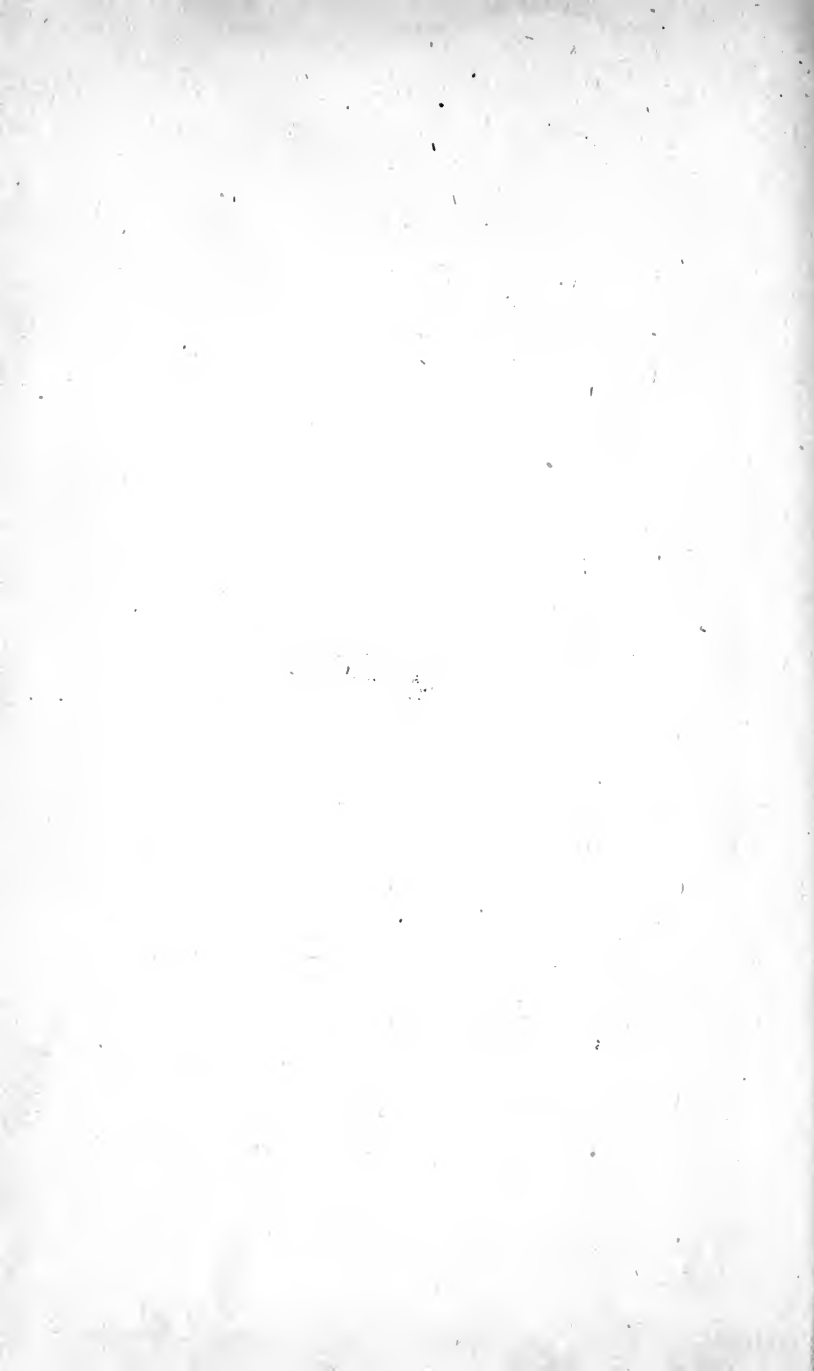
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summon strength, but it would not come. No, it wouldn't, and—and I would have gone away with you—would have given up my life here and gone with you because I loved you. Lawless, wicked, and, oh, so shameful.”

As she bowed low he bent over her. “Other half of my vagabond soul,” he said, “you are my resurrection and my light. In your eye is the constant proof of God; and if you loved, it was heaven-sent. And what *man* shall sit as a judge! Sam—Imogene, come here.”

[THE END.]





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